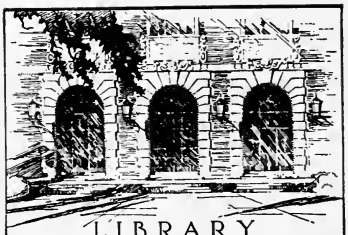
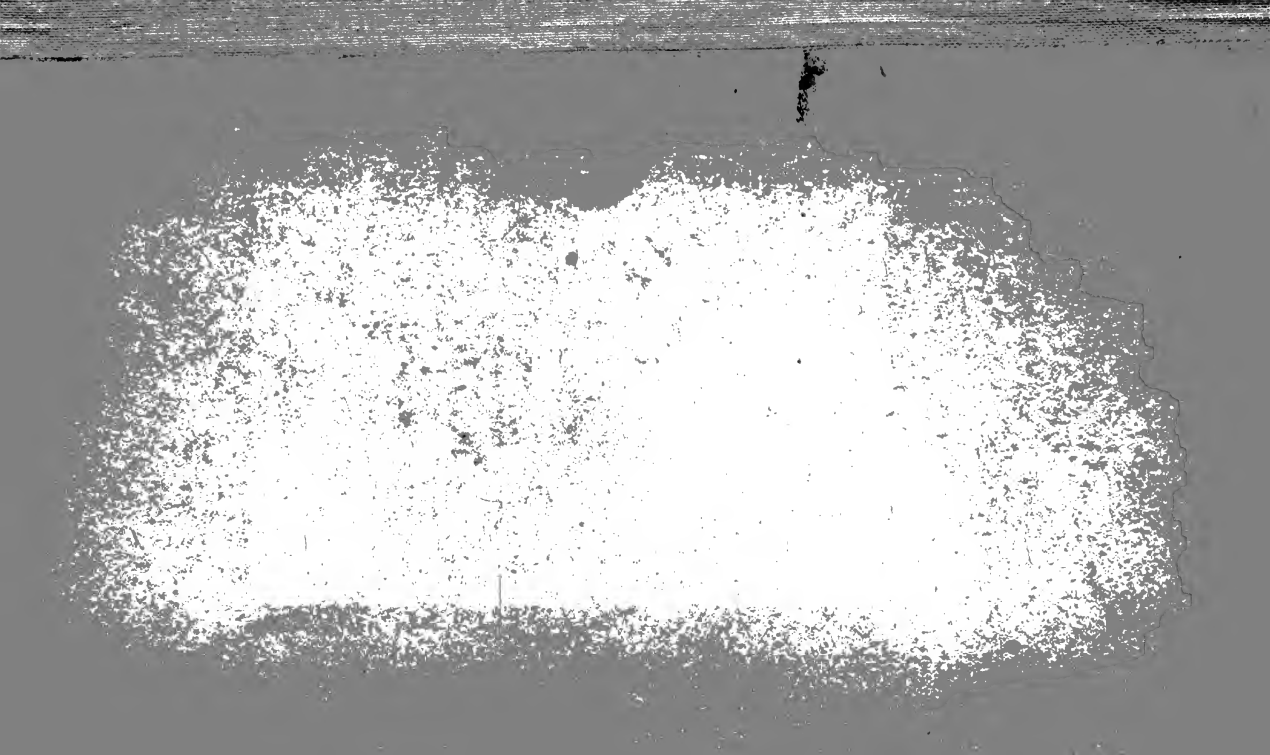
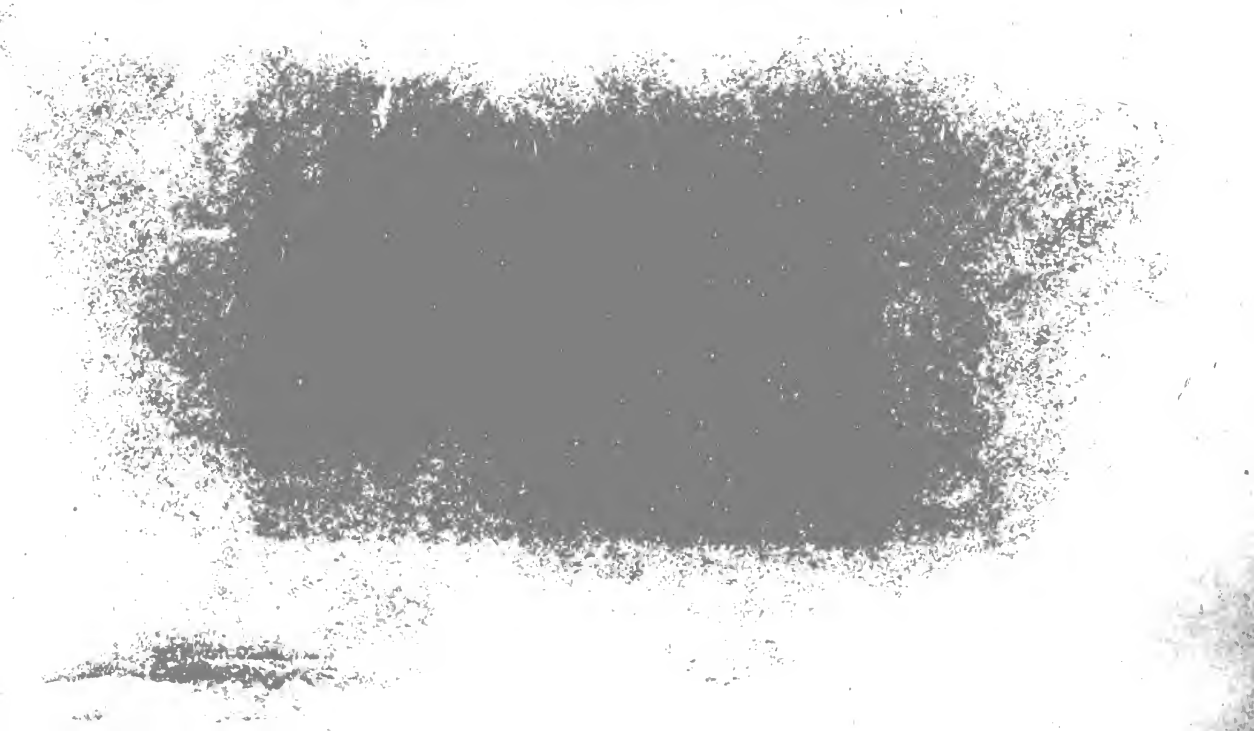


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
R37s
v. 3





# SO VERY HUMAN

A Tale of the Present Day.

BY

ALFRED BATE RICHARDS.

---

Ἀμφὶ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖς φόβος.

---

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1873.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

LONDON
PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, DUKE STREET,
LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS.

823
R37s
v.3

# CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.
SIR CROSSBILL CROSSBILL . . . . . 1

CHAPTER II.
EDGAR GRINDERBY DISINHERITS HIMSELF . . . . 7

CHAPTER III.
IN WHICH OLD GRINDERBY'S BOOT BEGINS TO GET TIGHT . . . . . 19

CHAPTER IV.
THE TEUTON'S TOAST . . . . . 35

CHAPTER V.
ROMAN CONQUESTS . . . . . 53

CHAPTER VI.
SOME UNPLEASANT TRUTHS . . . . . 63

CHAPTER VII.
AN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE THE PRESS . . . . . 70

CHAPTER VIII.
MRS. MINNIFEY MEETS A LORD . . . . . 83

CHAPTER IX.
A STORY THAT NEVER GROWS OLD . . . . . 90

CHAPTER X.
ON THE BANKS OF THE ARNO . . . . . 102

CHAPTER XI.
A GENERAL CHURCH MEETING . . . . . 159

CHAPTER XII.
A SISTER OF CHARITY AND HER BRETHREN . . . . 196

PAGE

CHAPTER XIII.
THE PARK WHICH IS NOT THE PEOPLE'S . . . . 229

CHAPTER XIV.
TOPS IS LET INTO THE SECRET . . . . . 244

CHAPTER XV.
A SANDWICH WITHOUT SALT . . . . . 277

CHAPTER XVI.
"ON REVIENT TOUJOURS," ETC. . . . . 300

CHAPTER XVII.
MR. STINGRAY'S RAPTURES . . . . . 315

CHAPTER XVIII.
A HANDFUL OF TENPENNY NAILS . . . . . 322

CHAPTER XIX.
THE OLD FOX HAS HIS EARTH STOPPED . . . . 330

CHAPTER XX.
INSPECTOR LANNER'S LITTLE PLANT . . . . 335

CHAPTER XXI.
THE CRIB AT DEPTFORD . . . . . 348

CHAPTER XXII.
SIGNOR MANVERINI'S LEAP FOR LIFE . . . . 361

CHAPTER XXIII.
OUTCAST AND OYSTER . . . . . 389

CHAPTER XXIV.
THE MEETING ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE . . . . 396

CHAPTER XXV.
THE CONFLAGRATION (UNLIMITED) . . . . . 405

CHAPTER XXVI.
REPARATION . . . . . 418

CHAPTER XXVII.
HER DECISION . . . . . 428

# SO VERY HUMAN.

## CHAPTER I.

### SIR CROSSBILL CROSSBILL.

"When the faithful mistress comes in contact with the profligate wife, the former can afford to lavish on the latter a splendid contempt.—*Aphorisms of Ivan Danovskoi, formerly Imperial Historiographer to the Czar.*

FOUR eventful years have passed since the circumstances narrated in our last volume, particularly eventful to the personages in whom we trust that we have interested our readers, and doubtless somewhat eventful to the rest of the world. Some had been born into this life without their being consulted on the subject, and others had taken their departure more or less unwillingly from it. Alas! to how few could the Almighty Ruler of the Universe give the flattering dismissal of "*bene decessit!*" How many trembled on the tremendous verge of nothingness with abject fear, and wished they might play their brief part over

again, and, oh! how differently! Among the departures was the no longer wealthy Grimshaw; for he was ruined on an immense scale of deficit. True, the poor pitman—for what else was he then?—knew nothing whatever about it. Ever since he was stricken, it had been his particular delusion to fancy he was insolvent, and luxury could not have persuaded him to the contrary, had he continued to enjoy it. True, Miss Grimshaw had set aside sufficient to keep him in comfort for his few remaining days. In one sense, his imbecility was most fortunate; for the indignant howl raised against him by the multitude, whom he had led into the slough of impecuniosity, was terrific, and would have been enough to have driven any, save a rich man, say, a Member of Parliament with a Brobdingnagian nest-egg of gold which nothing could wrest from him, into a state of remorseful lunacy, if it did not frighten him out of existence altogether. Miss Grimshaw did not long survive her brother. Her curls remained brown to the end, because no wig was ever sufficiently realistic to turn white at any degree of sorrow which the wearer might suffer. But if her former head-dress was something awful to behold, what was it now? Poor thing! she looked like a mummy with hearse-plumes. All this did not deter her youngest niece, Violet, from smoothing the latter end of her declining days. Unfortunately the old lady had invested the few thousand pounds belonging to her in an annuity, in order that her brother might not perceive the great and terrible change in his financial position. So when she died, there was but little left. Antique

caps, even when trimmed with real lace, are not exactly an investment in consols, nor were the aged lady's old dresses an ample fortune for a girl brought up in luxury. Poor Violet had nowhere to go to, so she advertised in the papers, and obtained the situation of a governess, just as Blanche Aubrey had done some years previously. In that promising and agreeable occupation we will for the present leave her. The eldest daughter was, as we know, married and provided for, and she allowed her other sisters the barest annuity upon which they could drag out their rapidly corroding and miserable existence. As for the sons —one became racing "tout" and billiard-marker; all knew degradation and misery. What can be imagined more miserable than the hybrid and half-educated young heirs to a parvenu's fortune, when the fortune proves a myth, and everything that can make life tolerable to them, or them tolerable to life, has vanished? Messrs. Grinderby and Cousens had dissolved partnership. The latter had retired to the provinces, that is, not exactly to his own province, which would have been a mean one, but to Norwich, the town which gave him birth. He had married the no longer very young lady, of whom we have narrated certain facts in this history—the one whom he was so anxious for a friend and client to endow with certain worldly wealth in the shape of a deed of gift, which proposal missed fire, in the manner we have already described. Why did he do this? We answer why are scoundrels weak? Why do they do anything which they do do?—an alliteration which we hope our readers will pardon. But the lady had

still another "beau" to her string, in the person of a money-lender in New Burlington-street, and after she became Mrs. Cousens, her conduct was so unguarded or so reckless, that even Cousens took exceptions to her rule of three. His parents intervened, and he proceeded for a divorce under the new Act. Unfortunately for him, another party also intervened in the shape of the Queen's Proctor, and Phil had a desperate fight for liberty, which he eventually obtained as follows. Sir Crossbill Crossbill, a judge of great and peculiar experience in such matters, at first showed great hostility to our smart young lawyer, who he seemed to consider did not come into Court with clean hands, and concerning whom he indulged in some very severe remarks. The fact is, that Phil's conduct was so remarkably easy and unsuspicious for a man of the world, that it looked as if he had been actually guilty of condonement of his wife's profligate conduct. As the case went on, the astute Phil displayed himself in so unfavourable a point of view, as to puzzle the worthy judge, who surveyed him every now and then with a sort of curiosity, just as a collector of creeping things would examine a strange reptile, which he was about to bottle for his museum. At length experience and legal acumen were fairly puzzled, if not deceived.

"I thought," said Sir Crossbill, in dissolving the legal bonds which bound Phil Cousens, gentleman, attorney-at-law, to Emma his wife—"I thought, in the commencement of this suit, that the petitioner was both knave and fool; the former, probably, considering his opportunities of worldly experience, and

the knowledge he might be supposed to have acquired in his profession, preponderating over the latter; that is, I thought him, if anything, more knave than fool. I have seen reason, as the case proceeded, to modify my opinion. I now consider him a greater fool than knave."

Our readers will judge for themselves whether Sir Crossbill was right in attributing less knavery than folly to Mr. Cousens. But to think that "sly Phil," "artful Phil," "Phil's alive Phil," the clever, smart London attorney, who prided himself upon his worldly astuteness, should be thus publicly characterised—it was too much!

Mr. Cousens retired to the country, and has only appeared once in London since, when he visited the Cattle Show, and hung his head when he met any one whom he recognised. He kept his father's books, and became slovenly in his apparel, in proportion to the improvement in the neatness of his handwriting. When we say that he left off wearing patent-leather boots in the morning, we feel that we have said a great deal. The only thing that we have heard of him was, that he made an offer of marriage to Miss Lambe, a well-to-do butcher's daughter of his mother's dissenting tenets, and was indignantly refused by that spirited young lady. In vain did Phil assure her that his happiness was at stake; the young lady refused her fair, but somewhat chapped hand, to the discomfited Mr. Cousens. It was evident she did not think her weal would be assured by such a bargain. "No!" she said, to a young and confidential friend and schoolmate, "my 'art must turn the scales when

I marry, and I never could become the bride of a man who, my pa says, has been so fast a liver, besides being divorced from his lawful partner. Only think of your husband's former wife being alive! I'd sooner marry a widower with ever so many children. No jointure would tempt me to such a second-hand turn-out." So Phil soon found that his attentions in the quarter of Lambe were vain. To do the young lady justice, she did not long keep him upon the hooks. "If your affections were buried in the grave, I could not give you any encouragement," she said, "to sue; it is utterly useless as it is." Phil looked sheepish enough at this; and went home feeling, as he declared afterwards, as if a knife were in him.

## CHAPTER II.

### EDGAR GRINDERBY DISINHERITS HIMSELF.

* * * * * *

Since the rogue builds up a fortune for the fool to waste away;
And by the son things are not done, though business still may thrive,
In the fine old evil way, as when the old "gent" was alive.

*Anon.*

Mr. Grinderby still pursued his nefarious calling, the only change being that he had discharged a clerk or two, not including the illustrious Snap, who had married on a slight increase of salary, and got a family. (Solicitors' clerks do increase the population, or how could so many music-halls fill, and so many small tobacconists exist by the sale of brier-wood pipes and cabbage-leaf regalias and Pickwicks?) And this brings us, in the consideration of the eternal fitness of things, to the question of whether the British cigar was first manufactured for the consumption of the gent, or the gent for the consumption of the British cigar? This is an illibera remark, and we apologise for our bad taste in appearing to contemn the tastes and wants of the million. We beg to state that we do not. We take a deep and earnest interest in the poor man's ounce of tea and

his half-hundred of coals. In this respect, a street child's China orange is of far more consequence to us than Lombard-street. We do not care, if the whole bench of Bishops should dine without an appetite, if thereby we could fill a dozen little craving stomachs with food.

Mr. Snap, *per se*, was not a man whom we could have wished to pursue a strictly anti-Malthusian career on this earth. How spitefully and brutally he behaved towards Aubrey! Yet, was this altogether opposed to nature, instinct, and reason? Why does a small cur bark at the heels of a Newfoundland dog? Why should a little "gent," whose opportunities of enjoyment fate has woefully curtailed in this world, feel any particular love or admiration for one of Nature's curled darlings, especially when the darling is in distress, and rapidly going self-doomed to ruin? To us the sympathy, admiration, and fidelity, so often manifested by the "lower" towards the "upper classes," as they are called, has often proved matter of wonder and surprise. Why should a servant like his master, a clerk his employer, or a serf his lord? Why should a poor man respect a rich man, or a pauper continually touch his battered old scarecrow hat for nothing, as he does when he is breaking stones on the road, to every well-dressed passer-by, and to every carriage, shut or open, whose dust only helps to aggravate the thirst of his leathery throat? But they do. And the oddness of the matter is, that the feeling is so seldom reciprocated. We see occasionally in the obituary of the "Times," the death of Thomas Nokes or John Styles, recorded as having

been for sixty years the confidential and trusted servant of Messrs. Smith or Lord Fitzbord; but we are not told that had the said Nokes or Styles lived a little longer, he would have been superannuated, and left to starve. Of course, such is not always the case. But we are not dealing with exceptions at this moment. We were defending ourselves from the possible charge of sneering at the cheap luxuries of the *genus* "gent," in the shape of a low or high music-hall, or of the perfidious cigar of Albion which poisons the aristocratic air. We said nothing against the coarse fumes of the bricklayer's matutinal pipe. He is no "gent," we know, and is not responsible for the "vamp" work of the contractor, who runs up those awfully insecure palaces of Aladdin, in the short summer Belgravian nights. One of the most snobbish things we ever read was apropos of cigars, in an abominable French novel which we got from a circulating library, whence it had doubtless been procured and read by many a fashionably fast young lady of the present day. The writer constantly informs us, that his hero of the moment is smoking a cigar of extravagant price—we forget how many sous. It is as if one should say, as the finishing touch to the portrait of a nobleman, after describing himself, his hair, eyes, moustache, stature, age, coat and pantaloons, boots and gloves, "and, moreover, he had a one and fourpenny cigar in his mouth." The Frenchman's exquisite of the first water of course rides "un beau cheval Anglais;" he is blasé and cynical in love, brutal in his manners towards women, a scoundrel, whom it would do one

good to kick; but he smokes a cigar at a franc and a half, while planning some depraved outrage, which no healthy brain could invent. It strikes us that there is a great deal of snobbishness of late growth in France. We are afraid that the disease spreads with commerce and civilisation. Where shall we have to go to find a gentleman by-and-bye? We suppose that there will be a few left for some time to come in Hungary and Morocco, some obscure parts of Turkey, and our North-American provinces.

We were speaking of Mr. Grinderby, and the present state of his affairs. The management of the Aubrey estates had proved a very comfortable and profitable affair; but on the whole his reputation began to get into bad odour. A number of suspicious circumstances and shady transactions had more or less got wind and obtained credence. A certain Vice-Chancellor had said something, which showed that even his old-womanish perceptions had been awakened to something like an approximate apprehension of the true state of the case. Mr. Grinderby was also much troubled about his eldest son, Edgar. That young man had shown generous and honourable traits, which alarmed the hard, worldly old reprobate, his father, who, to speak the truth, had invested a good deal of paternal affection in his degenerate boy. Not only did the lad display an unconquerable dislike to legal studies, but he had, on more than one occasion, shown great disgust for some of his father's proceedings. He had actually sympathised with one or two ruined clients, and had devoted some of the money given him to expend in an embryo law library, and

in furnishing his chambers in the Temple, to relieving the wants of a decayed tradesman and his family, whom Grinderby *père* had ruined. In process of this interference, Edgar Grinderby gained a knowledge of legal procedure and iniquities, which he would never have acquired from books or study, more particularly since he never could persuade himself to read for the law. These revelations were not purposely made by the poor tradesman, who would have spared the father a reproach for the sake of the son. But ugly facts would peep out, would intrude themselves, and could not be concealed. When the man, who had been formerly a successful newsvendor and stationer, told his two eldest children to thank their benefactor, Mr. Edgar, the second, a sharp little girl, refused to take any notice of him, and said:

"Me shan't speak to Mr. Grinderby; Mr. Grinderby wicked, bad man. Mr. Grinderby ruin my dear papa, and make little Mary hungry."

Her young brother coloured and then turned pale, and seated himself in the furthest corner, his little breast heaving with indignation.

"Come, Harry!" said the perplexed father, "and speak to this gentleman!"

The boy did not answer.

"Do you hear me, sir?" continued his parent.

A passionate burst of sobs choked the little fellow's utterance. "Didn't you say," he articulated, "that it was—him—Mr. Grinderby, that took mamma's bed—away, and k-k-k-killed her with cold? I wish I was bigger, and then I'd kill him, that I would." And the little fellow clenched his fist and shook it at

Edgar, who was dreadfully shocked and disconcerted. "Yes," continued the child, "he sent mamma away to Heaven, and we shall never see her any more."

Young Grinderby hastily grasped the hand of his father's client, and left the house. He did not return home; and the next day went to stay with a friend, and wrote thence to his father, asking his pardon, but saying that he would not be a burden to him any more, and would seek his own living. Old Grinderby was at first in a towering rage, and wrote his son a letter, which he got copied by Snap, who had now risen, or rather fallen to his confidence, telling him that he need never darken his door any more, nor expect from him a single shilling. Whatever it was that the youth answered, it perplexed the shrewd old lawyer sadly. It was something unlike anything he had known. It opened to him another view of life—one of which he had never before dreamt. His son, whom he had hoped to see Lord Chancellor, or a puisne judge at least—for Grinderby worshipped the Woolsack and the Bench with a kind of grim idolatry—his son, whom he had ruled with a rod of iron from infancy to puberty, had commenced his rebellious course by leaving the circuit, soon after he had joined; the young barrister having begun and ended his legal career at a midland county-town, where he made the most distinguished début within the memory of the oldest member of the Bar. Old Grinderby was actually complimented by a judge before whom he happened to appear on some business of a client, upon the talent and promise displayed by Edgar. To the father's dismay, nothing would induce his son

to continue afterwards on the circuit. In vain had the elder Grinderby touted and canvassed for briefs. The younger scion of that honourable house declared that the very thought of the horrid midland county-town, where he had gained his first laurels, made him ill.

"He did not know," he said, "which was worst to endure, the filth of the cases, the fetid closeness of the reeking atmosphere of the court where they were heard, or to mark the injustice of the practice and administration of the law"—that law which his father, and the majority of vulgar and inferior men of his stamp, held in such vast respect. He felt it to be the worship of a moral car of Juggernaut rolling chiefly over human distress.

About that time occurred the death, in that very Court, of one of the best and kindliest, and most intellectual judges who ever adorned the Bench — a man whose mind was *not* narrowed by the sharpening process on the grindstone of the law. He died of the poison stench of foul attorneydom and its clients, in an atmosphere robbed of oxygen by the breath of provincial villainy, and the exhalation from perspiring rascality, iniquity, and meanness, augmented by the unusual crowding of the unwashed and unkempt Bœotians of the district, in order to hear the details of a more than ordinary number of cases "unfit for publication." A couple of broken window-panes might have saved the precious life of one, for whose sake we might have fancied that whole town spared by a special act of Divine mercy, in spite of its black calendar of abominable crimes. As he fell

forward and died, he was in the act of addressing a solemn warning to the selfishness of the upper and middle classes; telling them that they neglected their duty as men and citizens, in erecting and maintaining an icy barrier between themselves and the lower orders. He was pointing out the want of sympathy between the rich and poor, which is the great blot of the age in this country. And in doing this, he died, as one may say, asphyxiated by the fumes of crime.

The death of this good man made a deep impression upon Edgar Grinderby. It crowned his strong inclination to abandon the law, with a final determination which nothing could break or alter. A stranger might have pitied old Grinderby, had he witnessed his disappointment, when he was acquainted with his son's resolution. And now he was defied, abandoned, insulted, not by words addressed to himself; for Edgar's language was most respectful and affectionate even in its firmness; but in the person of his cherished deity, Mammon, whom he had hugged to his heart of hearts, for whom he had lied, plundered, oppressed, and stolen. It was hard, very hard! He had been proud of Edgar—as a vulgar parent is proud of a gentlemanly son. He had educated him at Oxford, and paid his debts; with, for him, but little show of indignation. And now all his hopes were baffled by this eccentric obstinacy, this romantic nonsense, this absurd morbid mania of goodness; and finally his roof abandoned, his wealth despised, and his assistance rejected, before he had an opportunity of refusing it. We know "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless

child;" but what is even this, compared with the agony of feeling that a favourite child shrinks from the contemplation of parental misconduct and vice, and exhibits in return for all the affection lavished by a fond, though erring father, the disobedience of virtue, and the ingratitude of worth?

As we have spoken of the atrocity of country crimes and provincial wickedness, we must here hazard the observation, that whatever may be said about the demoralisation of London, there is nothing in it to be met with worse than, if equal to, rural atrocity and sin, when they are found in the full perfection of their unmolested fungous growth. There is nothing coarser than the courtesan, nothing rougher than the ruffian, nothing viler than the villain of your "sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," when self-planted wickedness crops out, as it will sometimes do. There are young men, ay, and women too, in the country to whom town can impart no dye of deeper hue, no obscener depravation of soul. The impure and diseased mind broods in seclusion and obscurity, and is apt to produce hideous monsters and abortions of sin, Βλαστάνειν ἀκορέστον ὀιζυν. We have known country lawyers even worse than Grinderby himself; men to whom Satan will assign the highest places on that roll from which no attorney's name will ever be struck off when once inscribed there by the illustrious Head of the Profession and Chief Examiner in evil proficiency himself.

When Mr. Grinderby, senior, found, after a few months, that Edgar did not apply to him for money,

he wrote a reproachful letter to the young man, accusing him of deserting him in his old age. Upon this Edgar called, and even stayed to dinner on his father's representation that he was very unwell. When the old man had drunk his bottle of port, he told his son that, if he would return home, he might do as he pleased, and read as much poetry as he liked. He might even have a piano, and smoke in his bedroom all day. He might keep a hunter; and a mistress too, the old sinner hinted, if he wished it. Edgar was no Puritan, but he shrank from this coarse and brutal ebullition of paternal regard. He thanked his father respectfully, but said that he had chosen his path in life, and would abide by it, if his father pleased.

"But I don't please," growled old Grinderby, utterly confounded by his son's conduct and determination.

All, however, that he could gain from him was a promise to dine at home once a month. Then Edgar, apart in her own room, tenderly kissed his mother, from whom he had hidden neither his motives nor his mode of life, and who sighed deeply while she approved his conduct. A very tender, good, weak woman that mother, with a strong chapel bias; but she loved her son dearly, and had imparted to him a great deal of her better nature.

And what was Edgar Grinderby's mode of life? From a newsvendor whom his father had ruined he got an introduction to a good-natured reporter on a daily paper, a man, like most of his class, of great and varied attainments, of singular shrewdness and

knowledge of the world, and yet perfect simplicity of character and utter genuine unselfishness of disposition. This gentleman eked out his modest income, when Parliament was not sitting, by compiling various cheap works for publishers, for which his discursive information and extraordinary memory and intelligence eminently qualified him. He was a walking encyclopædia of dates, facts, quotation, and precedent. He knew something of everything, and not a little of a great many subjects. He was struck by Edgar's story and ingenuous deportment, and offered, not only to teach him short-hand gratis, but to give him some second-hand literary work. "I'll guarantee you a pound a-week, my boy, to start with," he said. Nor did he ever make a sixpence out of the lad; but, on the contrary, actually contributed in a very small, but not the less valuable, degree to his means of existence. Edgar, unlike Arthur Aubrey, began at the beginning of the profession he had chosen, and gradually, but surely, worked his way up. Sometimes he would look in at "Cogers' Hall," or other "halls" not of "dazzling light," but of tobacco-flavoured discussion, and there learnt to express himself in public with fluency and precision. His opening speech on "Whether it is or is not expedient to maintain the Established Church in Ireland?" was considered a masterpiece of youthful eloquence; and the illustrious Jack Grady, a descendant of the Irish kings, the most facetious orator of the Fleet-street House of Commons, whose career gave rise to unlimited speculations as to what

he might, could, should, or would have done there, had he met with a constituency sufficiently tipsy at their own expense to return him, actually rose up and shook him by the hand, and offered to borrow half a crown and stand two glasses of whisky as a preliminary to proposing his health and speech. In this excellent company we must for the present leave him.

## CHAPTER III.

### IN WHICH OLD GRINDERBY'S BOOT BEGINS TO GET TOO TIGHT.

I'll none of it!
I tell you that your money is infècte
With Curses, that your Gold sweats Blood, and chinks
Like the Fiende's Dice wherewith for Soules they play
Of Misers, Usurers, Cozeners, and the like;
Or as the rattle of the New Worlde Snake
In Act to strike. I'll none of it, I saie!
I will starve rather. The rank Cannibal
Chuses not Orphans, nor the widowed Frames
Of those worn lean with Weeping, for his Prey.
I will not suck the Marrowe out of Grief
And so grow sleek. Out! out! A legal Ghoule
To feast on Ruin he himself hath made;
Vampyre and Ghoule too. I'll not join in it;
Nor act the Dastard's part to gather Fruit
Grown in a Golgotha without Regard
Of whence it came, or how manured the Field
With Tears of Victims, and the Substance ta'en
By vilest Arts away. I tell Thee this—
'Gainst All that Thou hast done, there is a Bill
Filed in Heav'n's Chancerie. A blacke Account!
I will not answer it, if Avoidance live
In the sweete Gifte of smiling Charitie.
Contempte of that Court is too dread a Thing,
Whose sentence from the Sentence Ultimate
Of Earthly Judges dates, and deals with all
As They have dealt with others. O, repent!
With all thy Wealth endowe some Hospital
And riche thy Soul with Treasure like to mine,
Which shall not melt in the Eternal Fire
Nor jaundice Thee for ever with Remorse
For small unholy Triumphs in thy Life
Of sordid Cunning.

*From the Scrivener's Heritage. A Play in Five Actes.* 1690.

ALTOGETHER, the mind of Mr. Grinderby, senior, of Webb's Fields, attorney-at-law, and rogue by Act

of Parliament, was sorely perplexed and troubled. His only son had blighted his views, as we have just recorded. His little establishment in the Grove of the Evangelist had died a natural death, if it might be so called, considering that his black-browed Egeria, to whom we reluctantly introduced our readers in the first volume of this history, one night indulged in an over-dose of brandy, and a coroner's inquest had been held in consequence, which caused Grinderby to tremble, lest his name should appear in the papers, which, indeed, it did in one weekly print. No less than three copies of that paper were sent to his wife by "friends" of the family; but the good dame, not boasting the best eyesight in the world, gave them all to her husband to glance over for her. Luckily, there was an account of a Dorcas meeting in the same issue, which enabled him perfectly to account for the mystery of the three papers so kindly sent. But this was not all which, about this period, disturbed the equanimity of lawyer Grinderby, and made him wince as if he had been stung by an Eastern gad-fly. One evening, about the period of the commencement of our resumed narrative, Mr. Grinderby had just finished his day's dirty work, and had also washed his legal hands physically clean, and was about to proceed home to Peckham, in the identical trap described so characteristically by Tops, drawn by another pair of old horses; for Grinderby never bought them young; when a note was placed in his hands, which the sole remaining clerk said was left by a dirty-looking man in a dust-coloured coat, with hair to match, the contents of which caused Mr. Grinderby as much trepi-

dation and annoyance, as any writ he had issued for many a day had occasioned a poverty-stricken debtor. Mr. Grinderby sat gazing at this note, until Tops, who was waiting in the square with the trap and the eldest Miss Grinderby, fancied that the old lawyer had had a fit, and "was 'arf a mind," as he expressed it, to jump off the box and run up in search of him. At length, however, he came down looking grey in the face with illness or anxiety, and got into the old mourning-coach, as some were in the habit of styling it. Miss Adalgisa Grinderby put down her novel of "Henrietta Temple," and made some indifferent observation about her "pa" being late. Mr. Grinderby sat frowning, in fierce and moody silence. Tops, on his part, indulged in some milder meditation, and more than once burst out laughing as if in remembrance of something funny which had occurred to him in early life.

"Well, I'm blest if I don't believe it really was him I see. I've never clapped eyes on him, since about the time he opened that corfy-shop in the Whitechapel-road! What a game that was! I never laughed so much since, nor afore. I do believe it was that as kept me alive the first year in that old ——'s" (tst-tst to the horses) "service. I should like to meet him again, and to know how he managed to get out of the bis'ness. It seemed a bang-up affair, but pr'aps," said Tops, reflecting, "it was all hinvestment and no profit. I never shall forget, no, not if I were to live as long as Mythooselum, how he did carry on, when that 'sloop' hestablishment was opened. How he did chaff the folks, hespecially the

perlice, from that open winder as he took the sash out of. The moment he saw a Bobby, he was down on him like a knife, inquiring whether his coat-pocket was water-tight, in case of any dampness in the pervisions; if he'd lately seen that all the meat-safes was locked careful, and taken the senses* of all the cook-maids in his district. There was a young Irishman who'd only just joined the Force. He cut up uncommon rough, he did. We had to square him with half a pint of whisky, and he got so drunk that he locked up a working man for being sober, and only kept his place next morning by hard swearing, and the evidence of a lot more perlicemen. Vell, he was the rummest customer hever I come across, and I wish he hadn't bolted out jest now so sudden that I couldn't stop him. Whatever could he be doing on that old staircase of Grinderby's? Pr'aps it was him he's been a seeing. Come hup will yer?" And so saying Tops solemnly and deliberately applied his heavy old-fashioned whip to the pair of ancient, half-bred, Flemish coach-horses he was driving, which he had privately nicknamed "Catsmeat" and "Dogsmeat," "a distinction," as he said, "without much difference."

Let us seize an opportunity of peeping over Mr. Grinderby's shoulder as he read and re-read the epistle which occasioned him so much concern and annoyance. It was as follows:

"Old Hoss,

"I have come back at last to this cuss of an island

* Query census.—*P. D.*

of yours, just to remind you of a little affair between us, which I dare say you fancied was settled and done with long ago. 'Tain't! and what's more, 'tain't going to be just yet, unless some one chooses to fix it at my price, and not yours. As a particularly old friend, you'll be glad to hear that I am quite well and safe from throat attacks; so well you'd scarcely know me at present. I hope you're the same. Your health, I reckon, depends entirely upon mine; for if I was taken ill, you'd follow as a matter of course. Curious! Isn't it? but true.

"My speculations on the other side of the water have turned out shadily enough! The last time I was entirely ruined there, I failed somehow to recuperate. A little bird on this side of the whale-pond told me just when I was casting about for a new start in life, of our friend A. A. having got up a pretty tall financial tree. A sort of Wellingtonia gigantea, and not being likely to come down again either, without assistance. The same ornithological correspondent informed me that *you* are managing his property for all parties, including the young gentleman himself. Perhaps you think I've come over to congratulate him on the subject. Now there's a certain document, which you thought you saw burnt with your own eyes. You were mistaken. It was only an office copy, which I made—a counterfeit, a 'duffer'—a notion which you ought to appreciate, I'm sure. Smart! wasn't it? Now it strikes me that it is a document written on a very incombustible sort of paper, and that it will take a considerable investment in lucifers to set a light to it.

"Your welfare was the first thing which I made the object of my inquiries on landing. This is not the season for canvas-back ducks, but I have brought over a barrel of Newtown pippins (our remarkably fine apple), and shall have the pleasure of sending you some, together with a few hickory nuts, of which I beg your acceptance. They are very hard to crack! Hoping shortly for the pleasure of an interview, at your convenience,

"I am,

"Yours truly,

"J. S. M.

"P.S. Write to these initials, P. O., Deptford. You may enclose the first half of a fifty, as I am short of cash, the remainder to follow."

Mr. Grinderby fairly writhed under the information contained in this epistle. In the first place, he had believed, as Manvers (for of course it was he) intimated in his letter, that the document referred to had indeed been burnt. It was then but a fac-simile, hurriedly substituted by a species of juggling trick, which he had seen apparently committed to the flames. Again, he never dreamt that Manvers would have dared to visit England thus, with capital punishment threatening him if detected. It was evident that no trifle would have tempted him to run such a risk; and now he, Grinderby, trembled for the safety of the ex-clerk and felon rowdy, from whom he had thought himself perfectly secure, and whose letters from America he had never replied to, and, in fact, barely glanced over when he received them.

If Manvers were taken, though without his instrumentality, and against his wishes and hopes, might not that worthy conceive that he had been betrayed by him, and peach in revenge? What? Ay, there was the rub. Even if he were taken at all, without suspicion of his lawyer accomplice, he might tell everything through mere wanton spite and malevolence. Altogether, Mr. Grinderby was never in his life before in so unenviable a frame of mind; and when he alighted at his house at Peckham, he spoke so savagely to Tops, that it nearly elicited an answer from that vivacious "whip," which would have ended his three years and a half service at the expiration of a month from that time. But Tops had his own reasons for putting up with old Grinderby's temper a little longer. It had been his Susan's sovereign pleasure, that he should enter into and remain in the lawyer's service, and Susan was expected very shortly in town. Yes, she had written to him that she was about starting for Paris *en route* to England from Florence, with her mistress, the distinguished foreign lady with whom she had gone abroad. During the whole period of her absence, Susan had been an excellent correspondent, and a more educated lover than Tops would have trembled for his chance of marrying a girl who, from her letters, was evidently making such progress in refinement and knowledge. But Tops, honest fellow, feared nothing of the kind, nor indeed had he any real grounds for so doing. Susan had no idea of marrying a "gentleman;" and as for those who would have trifled with her in any but an honourable

sense, she entertained for the whole class an unmitigated contempt and disgust, which it would, indeed, be a blessing to see shared by the majority of girls in her position. But we will now let the reader into a secret. At Susan's earnest solicitation, Tops had been labouring hard to "complete his eddicashun," as he at first called it. And though far from perfect, he had made wonderful progress. Having imparted his wish to young Grinderby, that noble-hearted young fellow had actually for a short time devoted three or four hours a week to his tuition, under the pretence of smoking his cigar in the harness-room. Therefore, when we just now quoted a brief soliloquy of the now more erudite Tops, our readers may have noticed some little improvement. In future we shall gladly divest his language of much of its vulgarity and cockneyisms. Not that it must be supposed that his dialect had acquired anything like Attic excellence. It was merely an improved Doric.

On the days when Mr. Tops received a letter from Susan, he was in the habit of wearing a flower in his button-hole. In the winter he would compound by adorning the horses with very spicy pink rosettes, a practice which Mr. Grinderby would have put down with great severity, had it not been for the interference of his daughter. Indeed, that young lady insisted so strongly on his always using them, that he was forced to have green and yellow rosettes made for ordinary occasions.

Susan had a double motive in causing Tops to reside with Grinderby. One was that she thought it would keep him quiet and out of mischief, and the

other that she had a vague notion of learning something about the progress of Aubrey's affairs. This had hitherto turned out a failure. Ever since Aubrey's sudden dissolution of his partnership in poverty with Tops, the latter had found no trace of his former master. In Grinderby's employ, indeed, he had little opportunity; but for at least two years he divided all his spare time between Susan and Lindley Murray on the one hand, and the attempt to find out Aubrey's retreat on the other. At last he came to the conclusion that Aubrey was either dead or abroad, and gave up the search, and his regret gradually yielded to the composing effect of time. There was one thing which seriously perplexed and disturbed Tops. This was a constant inclination to upset Grinderby's carriage. When it so happened that the road was bounded on either side by a very deep and particularly foul and muddy ditch, this desire became almost a monomania, and required the strongest exercise of self-restraint on the part of the unconscious attorney's coachman. This was only when Mr. Grinderby was alone inside; for Tops was far too gallant to meditate risking injury to Miss Grinderby's limbs, clothes, or nervous system.

"She's as vicious as she is ugly," said Tops, "and when she's drest out looks more like a boiled weasel in creenolyne, than a young woman as a man would leave his beer to go after. But no, no, it wouldn't wash, I say."

Persons unacquainted with the phraseology of Mr. Tops, might have imagined this to be a considerate allusion to the young lady's dress, which was not the

case. The good angel of Tops, whom one might imagine a winged jockey with doll's curls and blue eyes, intervened to preserve even Grinderby from a proceeding which, however just, would have condemned Tops, in a fiduciary point of view, as a Jehu of principle and worth.

"You see this is how it was," as Tops afterwards apologetically explained to Susan; "I ate his victuals and took his money, and wore his blessed old huniform, disguise, I call it, and so I couldn't very well tip over his aged conveyance among the effets, and them wriggling bull-heads, which I believe is the souls of young lawyers learning the first rudymens of their profession in black holes and slimy corners. I couldn't do it, you see, all jolly and straightforrerd, because I was in the old limb's service! Otherways, it was very tempting!"

To say that Tops did not burn for emancipation from the lawyer's service and the "disguise," which was a brown suit, very long in the skirts, like a bad imitation of the late Lord Harrington's liveries, would be a great deviation from the truth. In fact, he was like a young street athlete in an overcoat on a hot day, longing to appear in his flesh-coloured tights and sparkling cincture before an admiring crowd of spectators. Tops felt himself in a chrysalis state. It was, he said, a case of "grub," and no mistake, but he didn't exactly mean any allusion to the entomological transformation. The fact is, that Mr. Tops somewhat rejoiced in his immunity from recognition by his ancient "pals." He had grown a large pair of whiskers, and wore his hair much

longer. He never went to any of his old haunts, and upon one occasion sustained an inquiring stare from the mighty Binsby himself, with an unruffled serenity of non-avowal of his identity. But when that great personage proceeded to say: "Young man! I think we have met before somewhere," Tops utterly routed him by asking him if he had formerly been in the "Black Brigade, and been tried at Clerkenwell Sessions on suspicion of having stolen a hatchment."

There was but one person whom Tops longed very much to see in "a convivial pint of view," as he said, and this was the Downy Cove. Since that estimable person's brief and meteor-like career in the Whitechapel-road, as the spirited proprietor of the "Cabman's Pride," as it was called, a coffee-shop conducted upon entirely new principles, the Downy had utterly disappeared from the circle of society of which he was once the joy and the ornament.

It was, therefore, with no ordinary degree of excitement and interest that Tops, when perched lately on the summit of Mr. Grinderby's dingy drab hammercloth, saw the Downy issue rapidly from the doorway of Mr. Grinderby's staircase, and disappear so quickly that he in vain sought to attract his attention by alternate shouting and whistling.

"He was uncommon good company, you see," said Tops. "I wish he'd a bin more steady in bis'ness. Two hundred pound ain't to be got every day to take a house with. But he used to give away the corfy and victuals to them as couldn't pay, and them as could soon took the hint and followed such a

noble example. And then he was overtook by liquor on the morning that the shop opened, and I dare say he run a dead heat with it ever after, till the evening after the shop closed. It took only three months," said Tops, reflectively, "and it might have took three years ; but he must have come to grief in the end. As to setting him up in business, one might as well have started a monkey to sell nuts in a fair, and given him a cocoa-nut full of threepenny pieces for capittle, in the expectation of a large return. I only wish that angel in keeping had settled an annuity on him, paid weekly. That might have kept him in the centre of his hadmiring friends," continued Tops; "but I don't know that he'd ever have been sober again. He was born for vice-issitude, though there ain't no vice in him for that matter. I'd have given a month's celery to have been able to stop him this arternoon, if it were only to ask him, if he ever saw my poor governor again. But when Susan comes back, we must put our heads together to find them both out, leastways what has become of my poor master. I say 'master,'" added Tops, "because it were a pleasure to serve him. In spite of his behaviour to her, he was kind to every one else, a precious sight too kind and considyrate for his own interest. He was a gentleman as would give away his own living to a parcel of poor folks. I never see any one so thoughtful of others. Why, even when we were in lodgings, there was a poor old paralytic creetur used to come by every day with groundsel, and I do believe the governor went and bought a bird on purpose to have an excuse to deal with her.

"There's one thing I can't understamd," he continued, "which is, that my Susan never pitches into him now. Indeed, she left it off the very day I went to take the passage tickets in the Boulogne steamer for her and her new foreign missus to start. 'Tops!' says she, 'it's your duty never to lose sight of Mr. Aubrey. He's been a kind master to you, Tops. Don't you let him want for nothing.' And I never did whilst I could help it, leastways till he got restive and bolted clean out of sight. He said he wouldn't drag me down to poverty and starvation with him, as if I'd been a rich gent like himself, and been robbed by the lieyers."

"I'd give all I'm worth or likely to be worth in the world, except my Susan, to know what's become of him," observed Tops to his mother one Sunday afternoon, when that venerable dame had called in just to run over his linen. "My belief is he throwed himself in the river after *her*, or went on the ice in the Regent's Park when it wouldn't bear, along with a lot of other sooicides. It's my opinion that when a man's ruined by solicitors, he goes in for skating a purpose to avoid being a fellow-seedee, and 'seedy' enough a many of 'em are afore they do it. Then the coroner he calls it a 'watery end,' and inquires whether the drags was handy. And the perlice is instructed to take up the next lot as venture on in the same manner. And you might as well expect a tom-cat to go into the water to save a litter of drownded puppies, as a British Bobby to venture on the ice when it isn't strong enough to bear. Safe's the word with them, and then they'll go on as if they

was wanted. Not that I blame them much for that neither. Then there's a row in the Sunday papers about the ranger of the parks, and letting the water be so deep, and breaking it for the water-fowl, hetsaytera, hetsaytera, hetsaytera. It's all beginning at the wrong end, that's what it is. If people was not unfortynate, they wouldn't drownd themselves. I know what I'd do, if I had the power. I'd set a lot of starving navvies to deepen the hornamental water, and I'd show 'em how to make it useful, I would. The first day's black frost, providing it wasn't too severe, I'd start every attorney in England skating there. Them as couldn't cut out six and eightpence on the ice, should slide. I'd admit no one inside the railings that day without a certificate, for fear of accidenx. And if the ice was broken round the side, and they did all go to the bottom, it would be the greatest gain that England ever see in my opinion. But," concluded Tops, with a mournful shake of the head, "these are the kind of dreams that occur to a man when he's handling the ribbons, and fancies himself a hemperor. Water is not the helement that lawyers need stand much in fear of. Why don't I wish for a four-in-hand millanyone at once?" he asked. And his mother, who paused in the act of lifting a saucerful of tea to her lips in the front-loft parlour, replied very wisely:

"Ah! why not, James?" She thought him the cleverest young man out, and had even recommended a female friend to consult him about a mythical property, which some one had said was in the family, before her great uncle went to America; "for," she

said, "he's own head coachman to lawyer Grinderby, and drives him to town every morning." According to Mrs. Tops's notion, this was a species of legal education in itself.

"Bless her dear old heart!" said Tops, "I do believe if I was to drive the Rooshian ambassador, she'd think I could speak Rooshian."

And so she would have done. Oh, happy ignorance of matters legal, believing in the forms and names of things, believing in the judgments of judges and the verdicts of juries, the incorruptibility of the Bar, and the respectability of respectable and "eminent" firms of attorneys—unconscious that modern success is in itself suggestive of wrong. Oh, delightful old-womanish ignorance and credulity, believing in our statesmen, our generals, and admirals (with what old-womanish natural sympathy we pause not to declare), believing in our statues and memorials, our eulogies and threnodies, our spasmodic deifications of incapacity, treachery, connivance, imbecility, and crime. Is true fame worth having, when shared thus? Is there any true fame in, or of, this age? Are any secret historians writing the truth, we mean the true truth, *la vera verità*, of this period of imposture? Have preceding ages been as false and falsely recorded, and is all history a myth, or rather a tissue of falsehoods like the inscriptions chiselled by our sculptor masons now? Were all the great worthies and heroes of antiquity thieves and felons with stolen laurels, which should have graced the brows of other and unknown men? Did it happen in former times that a man of mediocre

intellect did stupidly and doggedly resist all improvement and enlightenment, invention and reform, until forced to yield little by little, inch by inch, to the pressure of necessity, and that such a man was chronicled as the pioneer and founder of all that which he had in reality opposed, while the bones of the true founders and pioneers were ground to mix with the material of his lying cenotaph, the monument of his pretended virtues and fictitious fame? We are inclined to think that it was not quite so bad of old. And perhaps it will not be quite so bad in the future, when the facts of the nineteenth century shall be finally recorded in the annals of mankind. The real story of the Crimean campaign, for instance, may yet be told. It takes ten years, more or less, now-a-days, to forget what a modern hero or statesman has done, or not done, and to invent a career for him. As for works of art, it is fortunate that our tributes in brass and marble are not likely to survive. The very bricks and mortar of this epoch are not of a durable composition. That which has been fitly but vulgarly described as the "literature of bosh," will haply return to the paper-mills of the period, and perish with the paper on which it is printed to the disgust of true thinking men.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TEUTON'S TOAST.

Geben sie mir—gif me—the lof, de brod, de bread, yas, and I shall vat you call toast him, mit mein frying-pike; aber—bot—your fraulein, de yong ladies, I shall toast him mit mein augen, mine eyes, and mit your porter bier gut, sehr gut, but not so better as de Rhein wein of mine belofed faderland.—*Teutonic Table-Talk in Leicester-"squar."*

From the Theatre of La Pergola at Florence a lady is being escorted to her home in triumph. She is seated in a carriage alone, surrounded by a shouting mob of men of all ages, among whom youth predominates. They have taken the horses out of her carriage, and are drawing it along as if she were some female conqueror. And so she is, "Melpomene Victrix!" She has conquered those impressionable hearts with song. She wears a light and exquisite coronal of gold round her small and classic head. It has just been enthusiastically presented to her by her Florentine admirers. She has triumphed at Rome, Milan, and Naples. She has been honoured by imperial recognition at St. Petersburg. The blaze of the torches illuminates her pale and beautiful countenance, touched with melancholy, but

serene and composed, as if all that passed around her were a natural accompaniment of her destiny, a tribute to the Royalty of Song, of which she was crowned a Queen by universal acclamation and rapturous consent. Ever and anon, as some louder plaudit or more lively demonstration greeted her, she would smile with touching sweetness, and incline her head with exquisite grace. Behold! she has reached her home. As she descends from her carriage, she is almost in danger from the pressure of her adorers, each of whom at that moment is ready to die—histrionically—at her feet. She walks over crushed violets and roses into the favoured building. When she has passed, young Italy fights for the flowers which her foot may have touched. Then the crowd disperses to refresh itself with mild potations suited to the clime. Anon it reassembles and treats the object of its adoration to a serenade; a somewhat superfluous tribute one cannot help thinking, but this is an idea of the unimpressionable sons of Albion. This is in Italy; and is not "La Diva" a daughter of Moldavia, naturalised and taught to warble in Italy; a mountain sylph, a forest nymph, a river goddess, a cantatrice of mysterious origin, as it is given out? Some, indeed, say she is the offspring of a Boyard; others declare her to be the lost child of a Pomeranian noble family captured in infancy by brigands, and found singing by a fountain, like a bird, at the age of twelve years, by her brother, who had long deemed her dead. Others held to a Georgian or Circassian theory of her extraction. At all events, there was sufficient romance

talked of her to furnish a dozen stories in a Milanese "Family Herald," or penny "Florence Journal," had such a thing existed. She is known, however, as the Signora Bianca Stellini, and shouts rend the air, when she comes forward on the hotel balcony, in her chaste robe of white muslin, and leans forward, the Giulietta of thousands of rapturous Romeos; that is, in their thought and desire. At length she retires, and the effervescence subsides. A party of Germans alone continue their bacchanalian orgies at a distant restaurant, and their deep choruses ever and anon startle the stillness of the moonlight night. They are chiefly from Rome, these absurd "younkers!" Let us listen for a moment to their harmless clamour. What is that ridiculous chant about the Ponte Mole? It is something very like nursery rhymes chanted by a stentorian chorus of grown-up men. How little pleases the manly German mind! Well, they are manly after all in their way. Manly? Look at their beards, and pipes, and bronzed faces! Still it is a pity that their ceremonials should be so meaningless and childish. But, hearken! There is the silence preceding something of superior interest. A pale, wild-looking, romantic, intellectual young man has risen, and is about to address them. He is Heinrich von Weber, the most promising of the artist-students at Rome, a poet, and enthusiastic Federalist. His picture of the "Apotheosis of Margaret," in the everlasting "Faust," made a great sensation in the Exhibition at Rome last year. The King of Bavaria affected his society, and was introduced by him to Roman artist life, the

Caffè Greco, and even the Lepre, where one ate "porcospino," "agro dolce," larks, thrushes, and robins, and smoked pipes between the courses, even when ladies, chiefly British and Russian, were among the guests. Had not the illustrious Humboldt presented the young Saxon with a gold medal? He was the youth of the hour, doomed, it may be, to be but little heard of hereafter. But no matter; there he was, the leader of that German *élite*, the king of all their folly, as well as their captain in things more serious; such as politics and fatherland, a duel, a picture, a poem, or a serious song. With due solemnity the illustrious youth addresses his beloved countrymen as follows. He spoke, and drew forth from the capacious pocket of his trousers a bronze-coloured shoe, of small feminine proportions, which had apparently done some service to its fair owner; and pouring into it, regardless of a leak, as much red wine as it would hold, from a huge flask-shaped bottle on the table (it was cheaper than any beer those students of art could procure there), he proceeded enthusiastically, amid the frantic excitement of all present, to quaff the contents to the health of the Fraülein Bianca. The rest followed his example. As each successively reached this novel drinking-cup to his lips, regardless of the ruby stream which trickled from the unmistakable hole worn between the sole and upper-leather, the whole party shouted and yelled "Hoch!" with acclamations that seemed to gain strength as the shoe went round. "To the Goddess!" they cried. The "Queen of Song!" the "Kaiserinn of Melody!" the "Nightingale!" the

"Swan of Sound!" Then the shoe was returned to Heinrich, who kissed it and pressed it to his velvet blouse. "My brothers," he said, "this sacred by-my-heart-never-to-be-sufficiently-adored sandal, by the beautiful priestess of the lyrical drama much worn, shall for ever, a precious relic, in my Saxon home be enshrined. Yes, in the name of our dear fatherland, I for ever consecrate it to the recollection of the divinity who has this night with her divine art our ears enraptured."

Then a chair was placed on the table, and the captain of these silly fellows placed in it. Some one had borrowed the hat of a Bersagliere from the landlord, and it was forthwith placed on Von Weber's head. On each side of him stood a student-artist with a drawn sword. The rest joined hands, and danced round the table, pipe in mouth, singing a doggerel song:

Is not this Firenze fair?
Ya, this is Firenze fair.
Is not this a fairy shoe?
Ya, bei himmel, that is true.
Whence arose this star divine,
That on F'renze fair doth shine,
Was't not from our glorious Rhine?
Ya! Fill high this cup with wine (*bis*).
Drei mal pledge the cup around;
Here no sober calf be found! &c. &c.

When these young men were perfectly hoarse and exhausted with their enthusiasm, those who were not entirely *hors de combat*, headed by Von Weber, took their departure, singing *en route*, and ever and anon dancing a quaint measure at the corners of streets, and at length melted away into the two or

three not very cleanly or commodious lodgings which had received the whole tobacco-reeking party on their arrival from the Eternal City. The rest slept where they fell, still grasping their pipes, as if they had been swords or battle-axes used in some deadly fight.

Whilst all this scene is being enacted, behold the romantic Bianca Stellini prepares to go to bed! She sits before a looking-glass in a spacious salon of the hotel, pensively regarding her own lovely features. Her long back-hair is being combed and brushed by a pretty attendant of some twenty-three or twenty-four summers, whose bright grey eyes, provoking lips, and very *retroussé* nose, form a portrait so fresh and charming as to attract the eye of the beholder ever and anon for a few brief moments even from the transcendent charms and classical features of her mistress.

"Lor, mum," said this young person, in answer apparently to some remark of the Signora, "do you think so? Well, I know I should never feel tired of such admiration."

"I assure you, Susan," said the mysterious daughter of the Boyard, the child of the Danube or the Rhine, the Circassian or Georgian nightingale, speaking remarkably good English; "I assure you, Susan, I long for peace and quiet, for a little cottage near the seaside in dear old England, and the society only of my sweet little prattler there," and she pointed towards a cot in which a child of some three or four years of age could be discerned sleeping, "your own faithful attendance, and the company of dear Violet

to help me to educate our babe. Thank Heaven! I have already acquired nearly sufficient to suffice for all our wants, and with one successful season in London, I shall be able to retire, and for ever bid adieu to the stage."

"Lor, mum!" rejoined Susan, a second time. "I declare I shall be quite sorry when it is all over; for it is so nice to have every one at your very feet, as it were, and the respect with which I'm treated is quite delightful, wherever we go. I'm sure, if I was only to cut off a lock of your hair, or to match it and say it was yours—which might be difficult seeing how fine it is, but then who'd be the wiser?—I could make a Mint of money, that I could. And as for presents, I'm sure many would make fortunes in my place, and do no harm neither. Whatever do you think happened this very night?" and Susan gave way to an irrepressible fit of laughing.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said her mistress, gravely. "I hope you have done nothing very silly."

"Me silly, mum? No, it's the German students. Such a set of madmen I never did see. A parcel of great stupid donkeys, with their rubbish! I couldn't help it, indeed! It's the first time I've done anything of the kind, and I hope you won't be angry. A saint couldn't have helped it."

"But tell me," said the Signora, for so we will call her, "what is it that you have done? I hope nothing very wrong, or foolish; nothing that will compromise——"

"Oh, mum! I am sure you needn't be afraid of me. Look at the offers I have had made for a lock of your

hair, a bouquet you had worn in your bosom, an old glove, or any such trifle; and I've never so much as disobeyed you by giving a single thing, when I might just as well have made a little fortune by a parcel of withered flowers instead of throwing them away. I could have robbed even the rag-bag to some purpose, I can tell you. Only you told me not, and I'd as leave have given away any of these ornaments as disobeyed your orders. But this time, it was something of my own! and look what I've got for it." And Susan displayed a piece of gold in a jubilant and triumphant manner.

"What have you been about?" inquired La Stellini, with a little more animation than usual.

"Figgury-vous, mum," replied the maid, "just after you came in to-night, the interpreter addressed me quite politely, and said that a young gentleman was very anxious to speak with me, a Mr. Henry, he said, a great artist from Rome. I thought it was some one who knew us there, and so I said 'Wee, avec playseer, mossoo.' Well, the young gentleman came smiling and bowing, and spoke in German, which is a language I never could abide. Quite a beautiful young man he was, if it hadn't been for his beard and his smoking, which smelt all the place. Well, Mossoo Albert, that's the interpreter, explained what he wanted, and whatever do you think it was, mum? You'll never guess, no, not in a week of Sundays, which to be sure are not much account here."

"Really, Susan," said La Stellini, as we shall in future call Blanche Aubrey, "I shall not trouble

myself much to guess. A flower, perhaps, or a bow from my dress. I am getting quite accustomed to this ridiculous homage."

"Not a bit of it, mum," was the answer. "You'll never guess."

"A glove, perhaps?" said Blanche, languidly.

"No, an old shoe!" replied the waiting-woman.

"How absurd!" exclaimed Blanche. "But I trust you did not give him anything of the kind. I shall be exceedingly angry."

"Lor, mum!" said Susan, "you nearly twitched the comb out of my hand. I declare you have made me quite hurt you. I have given away nothing belonging to you, and wouldn't do such a thing for all the world. But as the young gentleman wanted to buy an old shoe, I thought it very hard he shouldn't have one, and I let him have one of mine—that's all."

In spite of some degree of vexation, La Stellini could not help laughing at the ridiculous proceeding.

"If you'd seen him kiss it, and clasp it to his bosom, and turn up his eyes like a dying duck in a thunder-storm, you just would laugh, mum," said Susan. "I declare my side aches that dreadful, that I've been trying not to think of it for the last hour and more. You know those old bronze slippers that I brought from Paris last year. Well, it was one of them. It *was* an old one, and no mistake; but he said an old one, and so it was all right. And what do you think the interpreter explained to me that he told him to tell me he was going to do with it?"

"I don't know, indeed," said Blanche. "Perhaps

to put it under a glass case, the silly young fellow?"

"To drink your health in it, along with a lot more of them mad countrymen of his. 'Mong Dew!' said I, 'hey teel posseeble?' 'Wee, mumselle,' said Mossoo Albert, 'eels ong tray beong carparble.'"

"The nasty fellows!" said Blanche, who could not help smiling; "and so you got a gold piece for that act of deception? I hope you'll never do such a thing again."

"I should think there was not such another donkey in the world," replied Susan. "But if there is, I hope he won't tempt me. I wouldn't mind taking half the money for the odd old slipper, though it is the best of the two. He said an old one, and an old one he had; and what's more, if they're going to drink out of it, it must be mended first. For there was a hole in the sewing you might have put your finger in."

"And they'll say the nasty thing was mine," said La Signora. "Do you know I have a great mind to be very cross with you. If it were not that you really have a very small foot of your own, I don't think I should look over it."

Susan put forth and gazed at her own foot with great complacency. "That's what the gentleman said. He said, 'Oh, the small, the fairy foot of the commanding figure of that divine goddess,' or something like that. My size is fours, it's true enough; but look what a mite I am compared with you."

"I hope you won't part with one of your gloves in the same manner," said the lady, gravely. "My

foot is longer I dare say, and so may my hand be, but you split all my old gloves, and I don't think you could wear even my shoes very easily."

Poor Susan's hand *was* a little dumpy, and she knew it, as well as the remarkable tininess of her foot. The fact is she had worked more than she had walked.

"I won't do anything of the kind again, mum, you may depend upon me. But I couldn't help it this time, as the idea was so funny, and I happened to have those old slippers so handy. I should have left them behind at the hotel, if I hadn't obliged the young gentleman as I did."

"Well," said her mistress "it is a very foolish affair after all, and I am heartily tired of this sort of thing. There will be none of this nonsense in England, at any rate. But I dread going thither I own. What if I should be recognised? I cannot be so very much changed after all."

"Well, mum," said Susan, "you are not so much changed from the time that you were married, except in being stouter like, as you certainly are from that time when—things didn't go right, you know. You're not a bit like what you was four years ago. But, lor! mum, what with the different way of doing your hair, and the paint you're obliged to wear, and the difference in name, and your having been blind, and dead, and all—and not being expected, that is, folks never expecting to see you on the stage or anywhere again for that matter, who ever is to find it out? Not that I would go to any parties, or sing at concerts, or anything of that kind. I shouldn't wonder if lots

were to say, 'Dear me! How like some one I have known somewhere!' or 'Doesn't she put you in mind of that Mrs. Aubrey?' I beg your pardon, mum, I didn't mean to mention the name. It came out quite unexpected like."

"But supposing," said the Signora, "that some one in particular should see me—you know what I mean. Do you pretend to say that *he* would not know me?"

"There's no danger," replied Susan, "from all that I hear; for no one has seen *him* these three years and more." And she heaved a deep sigh. Had she looked at her mistress, she would have seen a strange and sudden shade, which darkened for a moment her expressive face.

"Oh!" said the lady aloud, but what she thought was another matter, "there is no danger. I dare say he has married again long ago. Another reason why I must carefully guard my secret."

"Gentlemen," answered Susan, "don't change their names when they marry again, and master isn't to be heard of anywhere. Besides, I know better than that. It wouldn't happen—no, not if he were to live a thousand years, poor gentleman! But it's my belief he's gone home, ever so long ago."

"Do not say so, Susan," said the Signora. "I tell you I feel certain that he is alive at this moment, and God forbid that it should be otherwise. The world is wide enough for us both. I should like to be sure of it, without seeing him, and to aid him anonymously if he is in need of it. This is one of my reasons for going to England this year. I shall

then retire and live in seclusion, probably in Wales, or it may be the South of France. But I shall first see you married to that faithful fellow, Tops; unless, indeed," she added, "you prefer one of your German admirers."

"Ugh!" said Susan," "none of your foreigners for me. An Englishman is quite good enough for that matter. As for Mr. Tops, I shall see how he has behaved himself. And if I did have a foreigner, it needn't be a German artist, considering I might have married a real Count and Chamberlain to the Pope himself at Rome."

The Signora could not help laughing at this reminiscence. "What!" she said. "Poor Count Greggs le Boshe, who used to show the English visitors the 'lions' of the Eternal City! Why, he was little better than a 'laquais de place,' and sixty years old, if he was a day. He always had a knife and fork and spoon at the table d'hôte of the English hotel, where Lord and Lady Madeiraville stayed so long."

"Indeed, mum," said Susan, "he was quite a gentleman, and would have made me his Countess, if I'd have had him."

"Don't you know, child, that he was an Englishman after all, a bankrupt hair-dresser from the City-road?" asked her mistress.

"Well, if he was an Englishman born, he was none the worse for that," said Susan; "and at any rate he was a foreign Count, and spoke broken English beautifully."

"He was an old rogue," observed the lady; "and what is more, has a wife living to this day, who lets

lodgings at Margate, and there is a pretty story about the manner in which he obtained his patent of nobility, such as it is. For the rest, he gained his living as a kind of amateur 'cicerone.' Fancy a nobleman who would pick up a scudo by showing the Baths of Caracalla, or the Tomb of Cecilia Metella, and hiring a carriage for any queer John Bull who couldn't speak a word of Italian. Besides, he only deceived thee, girl! They say he has also an Italian wife and family—an artists' model, or something of the kind."

"I'm sure, mum," says Susan, "it was all stories and jealousy. One needn't believe half one hears in England, and as for them foreign places, where there are so many queer folks mooning about with nothing to do, but to speak ill of everybody, what chance is there of hearing as much truth as a flea could carry in his eye without winking—I mean an English flea, and not one of the monsters in this country."

"You forget," said her mistress, "that it was you yourself told me all these things about the Count, and added that he was a nasty old man; and that you boxed his ears the day we all went to Tivoli, where that handsome Signor Salvi, the innkeeper, was so polite, and told Lord Madeiraville such scandalous stories about the English ladies who went to his hotel."

"Box his ears, indeed!" cried Mrs. Susan. "Of course I did; and should have done it, too, if he'd been a prince, let alone a Count and a Pope's what's-his-name, and a Sticherony and all, if he'd tried to kiss me unbewares. But he apologised like a real

nobleman as he was, and said it was the manners of his country, and the wine he'd been taking, and English roses and lilies which he wasn't used to, and he wrote a lot of poetry in Italian—such lovely writing it was, but for all that, I wouldn't have had him, if he'd been fifty times a Count. It was only 'poor passy ler tom.'"

"Upon my word," said the Signora Bianca, "your French accent is something wonderful. Hush! there's that dear child awake again!"

"Bless his little darling heart, so he is," quoth Susan; "and it's no wonder neither. What with fleas and musketeers, and the like, I wonder he isn't eaten up alive, I do. I wonder what they'd do, if there was no travellers, for I don't believe they'd touch a native. If they do, it don't trouble the Italians much, that's all."

Little Arthur, a sweet flaxen-haired child of some three years and a half old, was duly taken out of his cot, and kissed and hugged, and talked to as only mothers and nurses know how. The child did not in the least resemble his mother, which was so far fortunate, that it stopped all remarks and inquiries of an annoying character. No one would believe, much less suspect, that he was the son of the Prima Donna, whose dark eyes and hair presented quite a contrast to the little fellow's violet orbs and lint-white locks. It was tacitly presumed and understood that the great singer had adopted the infant of a "compatriote." At first she had repelled and combated the idea; but at length fell into it as a kind of thing that was thrust upon her, and not easily to be re-

sisted. When she asserted that the little Arturo was her own offspring every one smiled, and politely withheld their assent or credence. Aubrey, on the other hand, would have found some difficulty in denying the paternity of the blue-eyed darling, of whose very existence he was unconscious, even if he had not ceased to be conscious of anything, save in the spirit. Ah! who knows if or when an immortal unseen presence is near? Who can tell whether as a boon or a punishment, our souls or spirits may hover near those whom we have loved and still love in this world? And yet more, in certain conditions of mind or matter, does the anxious spirit ever take a visible form or shape through purpose or accident, or does the flesh ever *see* the spirit hovering near by some abnormal condition unknown to the reason and general experience of man? Where have we read that strange story of one who, travelling on a lonely road in a gig, carrying with him a heavy amount in notes and gold, suddenly became aware without surprise, and, as if it were a matter of course, that the phantasma of his dead brother was familiarly sitting by his side? Behold! two cut-throat desperadoes leap from behind a hedge to attack the solitary man as preconcerted, but quickly start back on perceiving that there are *two* persons to overcome, and leave their intended victim to pursue his journey, which he does so soon as he has rounded the first turning in the moonlit turnpike-road *alone!* Are we doomed to the invisible companionship of the dead? Do they watch us, or watch over us, protect or persecute, pity or patronise our actions and re-

maining lives? Do they sometimes wait for us, and hover round us for a limited period or not? In the intense solitude and silence of a desert island do the invisible and voiceless things around sometimes momentarily burst their spirit-bonds and flash into form and shape, by the mere intensity of volition on their own part, and become gifted with

Airy tongues that syllable men's names;

or is it that we see and hear differently in a clearer physical atmosphere, unclouded by mortal breath, and unpolluted by mortal passions, undeafened by the roar and din of the human crowd? Is it a privilege of solitude, a charter of the wilderness, sometimes thus to hold strange commune with the invisible world?

That night, when Blanche lay with Arthur, who had been disturbed in his sleep in his own little crib, tenderly embraced in her arms, she had a strange dream about Aubrey. She fancied that her love was strong as ever, and that nothing on his part had occurred to destroy it, only that he was removed out of her sight, and that she could not imagine how or why he was gone. Then she fancied little Arthur took her by the hand, and led her through the streets of London, saying, "Let us look for dear papa!" They passed through squalid, busy thoroughfares, but no one seemed to notice or even see them. Suddenly a tall female figure, clad in a white opera-cloak, came by, and throwing back the hood which concealed her features, displayed the stern and mournful face of Lady Courcy. "You are very



LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

late!" she breathed into her ear, and passed on. Then her father glided past, and frowned. "You are late!" he shouted, and was lost in the crowd. Then all the busy throng around, on every side, took up the word and hissed, and groaned, and murmured, and shouted the word, "Late! late! late!" Then she ran panting and crying out this sad word, "Late!" until she found herself kneeling by a pallet in an agony of grief, sobbing over a prostrate form. It was that of her husband. "Arthur! Arthur!" she cried, "it is I, Blanche! Look up; do you not see me, love?" Then he slowly turned his face round, and behold! it was of marble, without eyeballs, like that of a Pompeian statue which she had seen in the museum at Naples. Then all was changed, and she dreamt that she was lying by her husband's side, and that he had been unfaithful to her, and the thought was so terrible that she screamed out in her sleep and awoke, and found that he was gone, for ever gone! And with this she awoke, and all the truth rushed over her mind, and she clasped the little sleeping Arthur to her heart, and cried ever so bitterly in the night, as if it had all happened yesterday, and not ever so long ago, before that darling innocent was born.

## CHAPTER V.

### ROMAN CONQUESTS.

The "Mio Bello," addressed to him by the lovely Elena Fabiani, whispered of ecstatic passion to his soul all night; and the magic gleam of her large dark eyes haunted him, together with the faint odours of the crushed flowers of the Carnival; and all its wondrous pageantry of sight waved round him, like a tapestry, in his dreams, and the music of sweet voices rang in his ears, and he felt like a bemused Bottom, after the blandishments of the Fairy Queen. But the next day he awoke fortunately in Lent, and thought of an Italian mother-in-law, and an Italian father-in-law in a shiny cloak, smoking a paper cigarette, and all the Italian brothers and sisters whom he would have to maintain; and the fleas bit him vindictively into the full remembrance of his Anglo-Saxon birth and skin; and he looked out of the window and saw a procession of monks, and various unsavoury smells greeted him in his early walk; and when he called and saw the Fabiani, in her morning slovenliness surrounded by *toute la boutique*, his disenchantment was complete, and so our British Romeo bought a plentiful supply of soap and a new tooth-brush at the English apothecary's in the Piazza di Spagna, and left Rome, looking very much like Eustace Tomkinson again.—*Recollections of the Eternal City*, vol. ii. p. 1.

WE must now take a hurried retrospective view of the career of Blanche Aubrey, since she left her husband, and commenced the arduous study requisite to fit herself for the career of an opera-singer at Rome.

Furnished by her mysterious protectress, who bound her to inviolable secrecy as to their source, with ample and varied letters of introduction at Rome, Naples, and elsewhere, all relating to the profession she had chosen, and with five hundred

pounds to draw on, she had commenced, as we have seen, under the old maëstro, and received ample assistance from the eccentric nobleman who had been so struck with her grace and beauty during the early part of her sojourn at Rome. To the maëstro she had imparted the heads of her painful story, that is, that she was separated from a faithless husband, who was not even aware of her existence, and who, in fact, believed that she was no more. Under his advice, she assumed a foreign name, and he took care to publish a romantic story of her supposed Moldavian, Wallachian, or Circassian origin, knowing that the mystery would serve to enhance her fame. Sometimes he varied the story, and thus, as we have seen, a veil of doubt and obscurity was flung over her origin and history, and even the very race from which she was supposed to have sprung. Her extraordinary acquirements as a linguist were of great use in this respect. During her residence at Rome she made but one confidante, and that, by the advice of the maëstro, was her old friend, Lady Madeiraville, a talkative, but kind-hearted personage, who could safely be intrusted with a secret involving, as it did, a fiction and romance with the entire comfort and success of one for whom she had always entertained the warmest feelings of sympathy and friendship. Of course, Lord Madeiraville was included in this confidence; and the friendship and patronage of this distinguished pair were of the greatest service to her, not only during the winter throughout which they resided at Rome, but subsequently through the period of her musical probation;

and when she made her début at the "Tordinone," as the new prima donna who was to entrance the world with a dramatic genius and finished vocalisation which bade fair to make her the first operatic singer of her time. In spite of her dazzling beauty and unprotected state, there was something in her aspect and style, as well as conduct, which kept her multitudinous admirers within bounds. She had been singularly free from insult and importunity. Once a royal personage persecuted her for a brief time; and when his overtures became annoying, and allowed of no mistake, she granted him an interview alone, for the presence of the little Arthur in his cradle could hardly be reckoned as anything. We don't know all that transpired at that interview, but we can aver that the monarch shortly afterwards sent a present of a diamond ornament to the child, and that La Signora was introduced at Court under circumstances of marked distinction, and that particular attention was paid to her by the august ladies of that sovereign's family.

We have no doubt that Blanche knew pretty well the chivalrous character of the potentate to whom she accorded an interview which might otherwise have proved fraught with peril, if not to her virtue, to her good name. There is something terrible in the earnestness of offended genius and beauty, where there is no weakness felt, no *arrière pensée*, no possibility of surrender; not even the alarm of virtue, but the declaration of regal Purity that the very thought of familiarity, the hope of conquest, is an insult to be pardoned to a full repentance alone. Never in her

most striking histrionic pose, never in her most triumphant roulade of song, had Blanche appeared to such advantage as on this occasion; and when the royal libertine apologised, and in trembling accents asked if he might be permitted a place in her friendship and esteem, it was a man who asked pardon of a queen. From that moment, somehow or other, it became rumoured that the beautiful songstress was utterly unapproachable by the *roué* gang from highest to lowest. Then came offers of marriage innumerable. Half a dozen Italian princes looked upon her as a splendid source of income, and laid their titles, sans fortune, at her feet. Sir Bampton Nogs, our valuable ambassador at Naples, a little bald fellow with expediency and compromise written on his otherwise meaningless face, implored her to embellish his third era of widowhood, and restore respectability to his diplomatic palazzo. Austrian counts and barons offered her their manly "appui" in the matrimonial line, without proposing to deprive the stage of its brightest ornament. A Yankee who had "struck ile" asked her to make her home in the land of the setting sun, and grew somewhat abusive and personal at her refusal to share his dollars and partake of the pumpkin-pie of freedom under the protecting shadow of the American flag. To be rejected by a mere cuss of a "singing-girl," he felt as a personal affront from the Old World offered to him, Hon. Buffalo Humpville Slockdologer, as a representative of the New, in the face of the almighty creation; and he immediately penned an alarming article in the "New York Times," recom-

mending instant hostilities with Europe without a declaration of war, which was hereafter destined to be known as the "great Slockdologer doctrine of conquest." Nor was France unrepresented in the competition. There was a short, podgy, and very unpleasant man of thirty, who might have walked out of a Regent-street cartoon of "Punch," with hair like the bristles of an old blacking-brush, who stripped himself to the waist when he took his fencing lessons, and displayed a chest like a door-mat, who had fought several duels, and who was an Anglophobist of the fiercest description—this valorous personage fell into a perfectly disinterested fever of adoration and frenzy of passion for our heroine. We will do him the justice to say that he had not a scintilla of sordid calculation beyond a game of dominoes in his whole composition, and he loved as a haughty chimpanzee might be supposed to regard the object of his affections with a tropical sentiment and jealousy poivrée à l'Indienne. When M. Emile de la Grenouille-Jardinière heard that the Signora was ill of fever, he watched the house for days; when she was recovering, he spent, for him, a reckless amount in purchasing the most expensive flowers with which he waylaid Susan and the child. All this was touching and tender enough. But a dangerous and tragic phase succeeded. He got introduced to her receptions by a musical friend, and insulted a young Italian, the Marchese Picchino, in the grossest manner, and ran him through the body in a hostile encounter, in a truly ferocious style. Poor little harmless Picchino, who only just managed to survive his wound,

was one of those Italian nobles who, having been frivolously reared without any worthy object in life, was full of small devices and tricks, such as grown-up children amuse themselves with at a Roman soirée; and it was his ardour and familiarity in showing the Signora some slight effort of legerdemain which aroused the demoniac wrath of the inflammable son of Gaul, who called him cochon and Savoyard, and brutally spat in his face, so soon as they had left the hotel-door together. M. Emile thought he had done something to recommend him to the Signora's favour, but he soon found out his mistake. He threatened to shoot himself, and she sent for him as she did for the royal personage, and read him a lesson, which rather altered that fiery little disagreeable Frenchman's views.

"Listen," he said, soon after to a military friend, Le Capitaine Achille Billard, of the Fourteenth Regiment of the Line. "I am not poltron, I; but that woman it is an angel I tell you. She has made me shed tears like a veal. She has spoken to me of my mother, see you? She has recalled me a remembrance so soft. I had a mother so good, so tender, who loved me. Eh, well! What will you? I fight me no more in duel. I will not more cut the throats of the English. Henceforth, they are my brothers, for is she not my sister? Angel of Heaven! she will pray for me. Hold, my dear Billard. This poor Picchino! he has also a mother of whom I have withered the soul. I go to place myself at knees at her feet, to say 'Pardon, madame, pardon to this crime terrible, to this penitence enormous—pardon to

him who comes from assassinating your son.' Ah! but he will re-establish himself, I swear it. The medecin me it told. God be praised, he will live. And you, my dear Achille, who go in Africa to fight you against the enemies of France, you will spare to the mothers affectionate their sons when you shall be victor, is it not? for so she wills it—she of whom I am so perditiously (*éperdument*) amorous, of whom I shall guard the remembrance even to the tomb," &c.

"Decidedly he is mad, this poor little Emile," said Le Capitaine Billard to his brother officers that evening. "What shall we do with him? He will make himself monk. He is capable to become devout enough to make himself voyage as missionary, to be eaten by cannibals in praying them to become good Catholics, whilst he would wish to be not so tough, for their sakes. The amiable farceur—it was a good boy, and he fenced well, my word of honour. But now, sacred name of onion soup! it is finished of him. Go, my children, and above all do not become fatally amorous of an empress, or anything of that chic, when there are so many good little women in the world."

There was one thing which really did alarm Blanche greatly, and made her very anxious to quit Rome. This was the persecution of a sallow and cadaverous priest, who followed her in her walks, whenever he had an opportunity, and uttered the most frightful maledictions and imprecations, because she would not pause and listen to his atrocious suit. This sort of thing was not quite so easily put down as in Eng-

land. Indeed, the friends whom Blanche consulted advised her to take no notice, especially as she was not a Roman Catholic. This repulsive being haunted the Pincian Hill and Villa Borghese Gardens; and if any one else came within hearing, with the exception of Susan, and Blanche's young English friend, he would change his mingled blasphemies, maledictions, and entreaties, for prayers and beatific expressions. This holy man was difficult to deal with. It would not have done to horsewhip him, and he defied the law.

Even M. Emile would have been puzzled what to do with such a rival. His sainted mother would never have counselled him to lift his hand against the Church. Altogether there was something so unholy and "uncanny" in the proceedings of this terrible priest, who would have done credit to a romance of Mrs. Radcliffe, and who did not hesitate to threaten the object of his attentions with physical assassination as well as spiritual torments, if she refused to listen to his plaint. As for Susan, she came home one day and had a fit of hysterics, about which there was no mistake. So the whole party were glad to quit Rome, and leave the priest to the enjoyment of his own society on the Pincian, until a Swiss governess was unfortunate enough to come within the radius of the tentacles of this human Pieuvre, and her mysterious and terrible death thrilled through the bosoms of all the *forestieri* then resident at or visiting Rome. Pauvre Mademoiselle Louise! We think we see thee now in thy dark blue dress, and "chapeau de paille," guarding thy convoy of small children of the alder-

manic famille Wiggins, staying in the Via Ripetta at that time. We see that gay young Englishman leap from his horse, and run after thee with thy parasol left (was it accidentally?) on the seat where thou hadst been sitting thinking possibly of the Lake of Geneva, and thy cousin Victor, Chasseur d'Afrique, at that moment bivouacked near Constantine. We see him return the parasol, and then grasp an armful of roses which he had feloniously climbed up the lattice-work of yon Palazzetto to obtain. Then dost thou relent and smile, and then dost thou engage with him in animated conversation. The next day and the next, at that hour, I see you both, and also the children of the famille Wiggins. But Satan has entered your eight-day paradise in the likeness of that horrid priest. He follows and anathematises you. What a singularly unpleasant interruption! In vain does the young Englishman shake his fist, and tell that minister of religion to go and count his beads elsewhere. The charm is broken. The timid Louise saves herself, as the phrase runs. The priest remains master of the field. The next day Louise does not come; nor the next after that. The young Englishman goes to Naples for a month, and on his return learns that she has been foully murdered. One evening she went out alone, and was found strangled on the banks of the river. The famille Wiggins does all that it can, which is not much, to discover the assassin, and then leaves Rome, scarcely to regain its equanimity east of Clapham Park. The young Englishman sees the priest no more in the Borghese Gardens. The boa-constrictor hides himself under the

sacred vestments of his order. The Englishman does not know his name. He tells his story at the sham British Consulate, and is recommended "silence." He tells it elsewhere, and is advised to quit Rome. He is very indignant, and the next night is stabbed from behind as he is descending the Piazza di Spagna through the entire cover and leaves of a Russia leather pocket-book, which was in his breast-pocket over his heart, and a note of the circumstance being thus made on every page of his diary, he determines to take the hint and the diligence together, and bid farewell to the Eternal City for a time.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SOME UNPLEASANT TRUTHS.

To see England as it really is, one must go to a distance, and look through another atmosphere. There is too much noise of traffic and self-laudation there, and too much moral and physical fog. Besides, if you stand still to philosophise in so crowded a country, you will very likely get tripped up, or knocked down.—*Letters from the Acropolis.*

THERE is slavery and slavery in this world, tyranny and tyranny, injustice and injustice, hypocrisy and hypocrisy. The conduct of the priest, described in our last chapter, was very bad, and the system which protected him worse; as the whole is greater than a part. But, let us think a little. Have we nothing to condemn here? There is the Reverend Jabez Howlingcad, say of the pleasant suburb, where the famille Wiggins deems itself at length safe and protected from harm. Of what depravity has he not been guilty. Behold! At length he is found out. Oh, the hideous wolf! Are not the hounds of justice on his track? They have caught him, and he is merely out on bail. But hear his witnesses to character, observe the impediments which legal cunning places in the road, to trip up that blind, old, besotted

British Themis of ours. Here is a witness in straitened circumstances bribed not to appear in court. There are a brace of friendless servant-girls painted as depraved monsters seeking the ruin of a godly man. One of these wretches was not even born in wedlock, and the other once stole a cake when she was four years old. Can a jury of church-going cheesemongers convict on such evidence as this? The Reverend Jabez Howlingcad is acquitted amid the cheers of a full court, and his victims are prosecuted, and sent to a Penitentiary for five years. The congregation of the Reverend Jabez present him with a silver tea-service and a new Bible, and he becomes more popular than ever, as a persecuted man. They would have done it, if he had been proved guilty of sitting in the vestry upon the face of a new-born babe. Hypocrisy thick, slab, and unctuous, and legal fiction, cunningly made use of, carry all before them in England. Surely, we are free to pretend as much as we like, and to defend iniquity, so long as our money lasts. Else what would be the use of liberty, money, and the law? It would not do to horsewhip a priest in Rome. No! But can you even threaten with impunity to chastise an attorney who has tampered with your wife and robbed you (with due legal precautions) in England? Certainly not. There, the Pope and Superstition reign. Here, Mammon and Hypocrisy are supreme. There, a confessor purrs like a tame tom-cat about your house. Here, a scaly solicitor lubricates you with his saliva, and swallows you, land, houses, hereditaments, personal property, and all, as his legitimate prey. We mentioned just now

the "Pieuvre" made famous by the genius of Victor Hugo. Have we not here the great inky cuttle-fish of the law? What difference is there in the result, whether your daughter is seduced by her confessor, or whether ruin and misery, entailed by systematic fraud and villainy, drive her to something worse than death? Where are flesh and blood so cheap as in England? Where is oppression so morally ramified, coercion spread so net-like over a land? "What!" cries an optimist, "do you dare to say this of free England?" "Free!" to do what? To express opinions, and act upon them? Well, scarcely, in a state of society in which Sydney Smith declared that no one can afford an independent opinion who has not 1000*l.* a-year. Not free to tell the truth?—yes, a little somewhat, if you can be content without disciples or listeners; but not free to wear rags and beg. Ask that policeman! Free, then, in Heaven's name, to do what? The strong to perpetuate abuses, and the weak to starve and die, though not to commit suicide, if arrested in the act. You must not, freeman as you are, presume to cut your own throat clumsily, or it will be sewn up at the expense of the parish, and you will be condemned to hear a sermon without sympathy on the enormity of your crime, and be remanded to die properly of starvation, which a cynical coroner, with blasphemy more awful than your fate, calls the "Visitation of God." Strike off the manacles from yon cowering slave! Has he not landed at Dover, under our immortal Shakespeare's Cliff? Eh! what? That black vagrant convicted of destitution? Put him instantly in gaol! "Please, sir," said an

emaciated lad, in our hearing, the other day, to a "worthy magistrate," before whom he was brought previous to emancipation, for the second time, after receiving "a month" for begging—"please, sir, what am I to do?" The lad was incapable of work—he was too weak, he was in rags, penniless, and ill. Ahem! The question was a puzzler. What could he do, save beg again, and get another month? "It is a pity," privately observed to us afterwards our stipendiary friend on the bench, "that the Government does not avail itself of this raw material of beggary and starvation, to provide the nation with sailors." "Yes," we replied, "training ships would certainly not cost much more than the costly machinery of your office, which barely serves to keep down the predatory classes to a certain level, but may not suffice always to do even that. But the fact is, that the ship of the State has grounded on her beef-bones of waste and extravagance, and cannot be got off without a 'strong pull, and a long pull, and a pull altogether.'" We don't think he quite understood the meaning of our figure. There is a sad lack of common sense as well as humanity in this free and commercial country.

For us, we are content if these pages cause one man who has the power and will to work for the national and universal good, to pause and think, whether this great country, foremost in the van of civilisation and of science, this mighty atelier of rags, and cotton, and linen, and coal, and iron, this laboratory of adulteration, this populous school of cant, this mart of imposture and commerce, of knavery and

trade, this attorney-ridden community, this home of smug and satisfied corruption, this land of lordly palaces and ghastly crowded tenements, of want and crime, of churches, cathedrals, and printing-offices, of schools, and workhouses, and gaols, model gaols, and early graves—whether, in short, this Great Britain of the nineteenth century is rendering a fitting account of its national stewardship to Heaven; whether it is performing its vast mission worthily; whether it invites retribution, or is fitting to be saved! We know by whom and what we shall be condemned for that which we have written throughout this book. It is "morbid," it is "exaggerated;" "the writer is suffering from indigestion, disappointment, bile;" he is "a turgid declaimer," an "ill-conditioned enthusiast at the least." Yet, is it not true, O Heaven! And being true, shall it not be said? Any writer is allowed to describe it retail, by instalments as it were. One may paint a number of persons consisting of the 'unconvicted felons' of Society, and approach, as nearly as the genius of the author allows him, the terrible reality of the newspaper, which we read weekly or daily. A depraved parson, a villainous lawyer, a profligate nobleman, a dishonest merchant or clerk, a doctor who poisons his patients, nay, his wife and father, for that matter, are stock characters, merely admitting of variation in the portraiture of modern English life. Only one must not say, "This is English Society," and, above all, "This is England." It is nothing to speak of a seducer who battens on virtue, or of a roué who withers on vice, or even of a score of them if you please. Only do not attempt to

point a legislative moral, whilst you spice your social narrative with such characters. Do not say, "Such we, or you, are, noble Britons, glorious people, chosen children of commerce,

> Nation of glib hypocrites
> Eating rottenness like mites,"

unless you would be figuratively stoned. Nor do we who write this utterly despair of amendment and regeneration. Only it is useless to attempt to patch the body-politic. Neither police nor punishment will put down the "social evil;" they cannot even anticipate the garotter's clutch. There are thousands of honest persons in all classes, mute mourners over the decadence of England—thousands who deplore a state of things which renders it difficult for honesty to live, thus adding unwilling neophytes to the unpublished calendar of corruption and crime. The chief need is a MAN, a single uncorrupted and incorruptible statesman, whose views are sufficiently sound and broad, and whose brain does not run to seed in empty words alone. Not a reformer sprung from abuses, to whose talent the upholders of the system have only adroitly to adjust the exact reward, so that the means of bribery are not wasted in vain. Not a drab demagogue, not a crotchet-mongering fanatic of decline. Better the Dantons and Robespierres of Revolution than these; for out of Revolution a nation may rise again, but out of the fustian cowardice of compromise and connivance, the insincere and many-sided bargain-driving "patriotism" of the day, there is no new life to be had. Better the blighted topmost branches of the aristocratical tree, whence some green leaves still

put forth in semblance of delusive hope, than the rank weeds and undergrowth which rear their base heads from the polluted soil made rich with the sweat of over-taxed and over-worked labour, and the artificial manure ground by ten thousand whirring mills out of starved mechanics' and children's bones. Faugh! merchant-princes, indeed! ever striving in vain to make gentlemen out of their sons. When trade and manufacture have reached that point, that a self-made bankrupt merchant's bond is no better than his word, a prince of such creation is the most sordid of imaginable tyrants, as Mammon was the least elevated of the spirits in the Pandemonium of the poet's dream. A merchant prince's son! say rather a born black-leg, who fails only from want of wit to compete with the professional scoundrels of the Turf:

> Non his juventas orta parentibus
> Infecit æquor sanguine *Gallico*,
> Hoc fonte derivata *pestis*
> In patriam populumque fluxit.

Let us hope, we still say, that a MAN, such as we have suggested, may arise for England's redemption and fame.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN WHICH THERE IS AN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE THE PRESS.

If Heaven foredoom that in the martial field
The flashing sabre's hilt I ne'er may press,
In ink and gall be steeped the arm I wield,
Not thus, I trust, to serve mankind the less.
*Translation from André Chénier.*

WHO was Mr. Edgar Leslie, at present staying in Florence, where he is busy enough, at least in appearance, and what may his occupation be? And how came Miss Violet Grimshaw to be companion to the Signora Bianca Stellini? From the manner in which these young persons are conversing in a salon of the Signora's apartments, we should imagine that they will not object to being mentioned together, and their position, prospects, &c., discussed and ventilated in the same chapter of this history.

We have seen Mr. Leslie before. He has changed his name, but without any formal announcement. He has made great progress on the Press. He holds rank in the great army of the Fourth Estate. He is not a general, nor even a colonel, but he may fairly

be considered to have won a field-officer's rank. He has described battles, that young man, which is as much as fighting them, and sometimes more. He is own correspondent of a daily London paper. He has even now come on a special mission to Italy; and Fortune, wielding the interests of the journal with which he is connected, has detained him at Florence, that is all. It is not his Capua. There is for him a great attraction there, it is true; but he would leave at an hour's, nay, a quarter of an hour's notice, were it his duty to do so, without wishing any one good-bye. He keeps all his bills paid to the last possible instant ready to start. He has his linen washed by instalments, in case of sudden departure. He has left shirts and other articles of under-clothing all over the Continent. His name has become celebrated throughout Europe and America. When he returns to London, at least one hundred gentlemen, foremost in the ranks of information and knowledge, will invite him to a congratulatory banquet. Edgar Leslie, as we shall always call him in future, got early into the literary and journalistic grooves, which Aubrey was unable to accomplish. Leslie commenced young, was duly apprenticed to the art, learnt short-hand, which is to journalism what a knowledge of book-keeping by double entry is to a mercantile clerk: he began at the beginning and worked steadily up. He accommodated himself to the market, and wrote for a long time only to demand; consequently, after a due period of probation, anything which he may write will command a ready sale. Some day or other, perhaps, he will publish an ambitious work; will enter

the lists as an original writer; a novelist, historian, dramatist, or even poet—who knows? Even should he fail in reality, his productions will not fall dead—they will command attention, and be believed in, until they are found out. We do not yet know whether he has genius, or is possessed even of a high order of talent. But he is a very clever fellow, on the high road to success. He is considered an authority upon most things—poetry, painting, the drama, the arts and sciences, moral, ethical, religious and political matters. Doubtless, he does know a great deal. But the craft of journalism is, while saying what you do know about a thing, neatly to avoid confessing or showing what you do not know. If you don't know exactly where Trebizonde is, you needn't say so; if you don't remember its name, you call it an Eastern mart. If you forget, or never knew a certain authority, you write, if you would quote a saying which you do know, "A celebrated writer has said," &c. If, on the other hand, you can call to mind the author, but cannot correctly quote the saying, you write, "Every one is familiar with the aphorism of Grotius, or the observation of Seneca," just indicating or hinting at whatever it may chance to be. Then, what opportunities you have of displaying your knowledge? You can work the exact distance of the Georgium Sidus, if you happen to know it, into an article on street-begging, the Reform Bill, or soldiers' wives. You may spin a yarn upon almost any topic, and connect it, in a wonderful manner, with the subject you have in hand in the closing sentence of your leading article. You can turn to an encyclopædia,

a gazetteer, a Lemprière, or your own note-book, and illustrate a subject in the most elaborate style. There is no one to check this natural flux of information. What a marvel of erudition a man is considered who pours forth a perfect cataract of such knowledge in leaded type down a column of a daily paper upon a topic of the day! How few think of the sources of the supply. But the foreign correspondent and "commissioner" must draw largely upon his own actual resources and intelligence. True, he cannot easily be contradicted; and if he is, it is generally when the interest of the subject has died away, and nobody cares whether he was right or wrong. Still the republic of letters is the greatest and most powerful in the world, and journalism is the chief human solace, instruction, ay, and hope, of mankind. We have indulged in a smile at the cataract of pseudo-learning, the manufactured torrent of words. Hold! let us bow in wonder before the mighty roar of the steam-press, whose combined engines might drown the thunder of Niagara itself. Look! where in mystery and in darkness ten thousand flame-eyed genii work! Listen to the whirring of their wings, the snorting of their nostrils, the hiss of their fiery breath. Behold! how in a night the multitudinous thoughts of men are gathered and sown in marvellous order, and bound in iron frames, and in the dawn of the morrow the white sheets blossom covered with the magic of printed words, and are spread broadcast thick as snow-flakes, or the myriad leaves of Nature's autumnal diary tempest-blown over the land. Yet after all these are no great immortals, no Titanic

flame-breathing spirits, no "lubber fiends," who are busy in this wondrous task; it is the growth and spread of daily human intelligence collected, organised, uttered, and sent forth by human means. It is only the newspaper and periodical press of civilised humanity worked by the perseverance of mortal energies, bending and using to its purposes the material agencies of fire, water, earth, and air—spelling industriously the first letters of the alphabet of the fifth and all-pervading element, electricity, in the dim vestibule of the Temple of Science, in order to achieve new triumphs and outmarvel the Present and the Past. Out, imp! avaunt, thou little ragged pest! Yet stay; what says he? "'Times,' sir, 'Standard,' 'Telegraph,' 'Daily News,' 'Star,' or 'Post,' 'Glowworm,' sir? sixteenth edition!" Ha! ha! Come hither my intelligent little man! How many editions did you say? What! eighteen? Two more, since he last spoke! What is the last latest news? Hem! "Mr. Bright at Cottonopolis, by electric telegraph. A man's eye knocked out by his wife. Latest news—A mad bull in little Trinity-lane! Four children born in a garret in Spitalfields. Suicide of the father! Birth of an infant princess. Great rejoicings! Last job of the Admiralty. The Fleet supplied with Quaker guns by a Birmingham firm. Review of half a battery of field artillery, by H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief, at least five hundred troops on the ground. A lunatic in Parliament." Surely, child, thou wilt not palm *that* on me for news. "Mr. Gladstone's Irish conciliation scheme. Abortion of

Lord Nambypamby's Bill to provide for the Sabbath instruction of the monkeys in the Regent's Park."

Surely much of this intelligence might have kept a week without injury to the public or private interests of the community! We must take the evil with the good, the sham with the real, the empty with the solid, the loss with the gain, assured that there *is* gain and progress, enlightenment and improvement, additional freedom of thought and action, through the Press. Stop! thou blue-aproned fiend, busy torturing those meek-eyed baby beeves in that hideous, revolting way—thou greasy cattle-market Caligula! thou infernal inquisitor of the shambles. Stop! Hold thy abhorred hands, which would crimsom Bethesda itself. Take off those red gloves, we say, which look as if thou hadst purchased them for the slaughter of innocence from a murderess in a fancy bazaar of Pandemonium itself. Nay, thou hast neither ruth, nor comprehension of mercy in thy suety soul. But we read our newspaper, and we will eat no more white veal. Arrest yon executioner's arm! Legally, that patriot-martyr deserves death. In the eyes of God and humanity, and State-wisdom, no! He shall not die. A hundred pens are busy writing his reprieve in the Press. The minister *dares* not sign that death-warrant. He has glanced over the morning journals, and sees that it cannot be. There is a copy of a newspaper blotted with tears on the breakfast-table of a palace. Were that life taken, hundreds and perhaps thousands of deaths would follow. The corpse of Emmett still bleeds. Years

ago, we ourselves aided to start a newspaper agitation, which saved a hero from a felon's death. He lived to clasp us to his heart, and has lived to win name and fame, the meed of valour, and the admiration of mankind. In the mean time, a grisly troop of abuses have gone to their graves sentenced and executed by the Press. The hand of the Press shall yet burn the scourge which brands with infamy and dishonour the soldier's back, and remove the foul stain of indecency from the barrack-room, where the wife of his scarred bosom sleeps. The Press will be champion and advocate still of starved needlewomen, and unwilling Magdalens hounded on by necessity to shame; of the overworked and ill-paid mechanic; of virtuous Sabbath recreation for the poor; of the ragged school child's summer draught of fresh air; of the aged and infirm pauper, and the street pariah, who might be apprenticed to a saving and prudent State. The economies of modern State-craft are the dry crusts stolen from the cellars and garrets of the poor, and sold to the rag-picking fiend, that the rich may be more rich. The withering sarcasm and invective of the Press shall expose this heartless and hollow parsimony, and inaugurate a better state of things. Yonder minister makes a false statement in the Senate. Straightway fifty burning articles arraign him before the country, and he is driven out of office by the force of public contempt. The Press is the guardian of our liberties, the avant-garde that apprises us of danger, the beacon-light and look-out, the averter and rebuker, the warder and warner against evil in whatsoever shape. The Press will

work for better homes and higher rewards for humble industry; for the honest and righteous appropriation of charities and beneficent trusts; for the unmasking and unveiling of hypocrisies, and the spread of education and Christian toleration, and sympathy over the land. And, oh! if it would raise once again the banner of St. George against the fell scaly dragon of legal iniquity that annually devours the hearts and lives and substance of so many; the pestilential brood of Chancery and attorneydom, the venomous wriggling monster of the law, and all those haunts and dens of mischief including Lincoln's Inn, and Temple, Gray's Inn, and substantial brick-house with brass knocker, in the country town, United Law and Law Clerks' Institutions and all, and give us in their place a code, and not a devil's maze, justice, and not an atrocious farce, the open, fair, and high-minded Advocate, depending for practice on his successful intelligence, unblemished integrity, and good fame, and not the corrupt mystery and bonded brotherhood of fraud, artifice, contradiction, robbery, and crime, which now makes the "law" a stinking byword in the apprehension of all honest men, then what a debt of gratitude would not England owe to her enlightened Fourth Estate, what blessing could reward the boon conferred on Britain by an independent and enlightened Press?

In point of rewards and emoluments, with rare exceptions, the newspaper Press in this country does not hold out temptations to the aspirant of a particularly solid or seducing kind. On the contrary, its pay is limited, and its honest patronage small. Nor

is its anonymity very captivating to an ambitious mind. But, on the other hand, what conscious power, what glorious self-approval to lead, and mould, to improve and reprove, to influence and raise our fellow-men! What charm in the hidden hand of the leader writer—what delight in the majesty and influence of the editorial chair! What heart-felt gratification in knocking down the tottering edifice of some wretched abuse! What soul-felt pleasure in strewing the path of duty and heroism with flowers, and in shaking a tyrant's throne.* Edgar Leslie had thought out

* This, like the rest of the book, was written some five years ago, and the author has not thought fit to change the date, or bring his story down to a later period. But never in the history of the newspaper world, since Nathaniel Butter published the first English journal, the "Weekely Newes," on the 23rd of May, 1622, never since old John Walter, in 1788, issued his reasons for calling his journal the "Times," in that wonderful address of his, down to the present era of the Press, was such an arena opened out to journalism as there is now. At this juncture, the highest efforts, the noblest aims and endeavours of the Press, are claimed and called for, not by England alone, but by civilised humanity. Scores of daring correspondents have accompanied the French and Prussian armies in the field during the late portentous struggle, and the result of their perils and labours has been such a word-photograph of horror and suffering as the thoughtful, the educated and intellectual, the good, the gentle, and the humane of mankind have never before seen. The war correspondents of 1870-1 have not exaggerated—for they could not—the wickedness and wantonness, the "abomination of desolation," the cruel butchery, the pathetic sorrow, the horrifying and touching incidents of the late rapid and sanguinary campaign in the neighbouring land of France. Amid the painting of these scenes of carnage, words of solemn warning have been uttered sometimes involuntarily, and sometimes with deep meaning, and deliberate intent. These warnings have counselled preparation to England. They have solemnly abjured her to arm, not for aggressive purposes, that it is needless to say, but to protect her own soil from a visitation such as France has experienced. No Chorus of a Greek Play uttering a foregone conclusion in prophetic phrase could more clearly designate the awful catastrophe that may await this country, if she continues to grudge the requisite insurance against fire and sword. Therefore, let no one mistake the meaning of that which we are about to say. Let England be armed, and her moral backed by her physical influence; and then, let her Press join with that of other countries in the highest and holiest mission of enlightened

this inspiring theme, this solace of midnight toil. In early youth he had wished to be a soldier—he now preferred the intellectual ranks, to be a moral engineer of Progress, a mental pioneer of the army of freedom and thought. Long since he had addressed himself in the spirit, if not the words, of André Chénier, which we have prefixed to this chapter.

Young Leslie could never have been a mere military machine, even in his country's service, and at the bidding of her government. He must have known that the cause was good and the war just, in which

humanity. Let its text be the Curse of Cain, and let it strive calmly and philosophically and with dignity, yet ardently and eloquently, to write down the practice of wholesale homicide and murder, in which despots and statesmen, and venerable monarchs, invoking the name of the Most High, indubitably triumph and delight. If the monarchs will not listen to reason and true religion, the peoples surely will, and their voice must in the end prevail.

Neither the people of Germany, nor the people of France desired this sanguinary war, whose daily chronicles curdle the blood with horror. Yet how little of the dread immensity of carnage can each single correspondent relate. A human marmalade of flesh and entrails, with shattered bones sticking out like cherry-stalks, and mingled and mashed with parti-coloured rags of uniform, and this ghastly sight extending for miles, and seen for hour after hour, is an epitome of a single description of the route around Sedan. Whether it was king or emperor, craft of Bismarck, or folly of Ollivier, that prepared this evil sacrifice, it was not the peoples' work! In France, or rather Paris, a few abandoned wretches hounded on Zouaves and Turcos to the work of death. In Germany, the passions of the masses have been aroused during the struggle. But the rulers decreed the war. And now, what do we behold? A scene to make the angels weep. These things should not be; and to prevent their future recurrence, must journalism labour, early and late, in the task of enlightenment and the instruction of mankind. But first the Press of England should teach the English nation the utter futility of moral opinion and of the wish to avoid war, unless prepared to command peace and dictate humanity to the world. Alas! Britannia is now unhappily only represented by her comic journals in her right guise, leaning on a cannon, with drawn sword in hand, and the martial frown of undaunted resolution to do and dare all rather than yield. For we are now yielding all to the base expediency of compromise, which will rather hurry on than defer the day of final sanguinary destruction and doom. *Note*, April, 1871.

he engaged. Otherwise he would have been wretched, and might have appeared even a coward. Yet in the performance of his duty of chronicler of campaigns and correspondent at the seat of war, he had more than once merited a medal for valour and humane daring in the field.

Such was Leslie—such the career he had chosen—such are many of the men who form at this moment the Advanced Guard of British journalism. Intelligent, devoted, ready, brave, and accomplished, graphic in his narrative, fertile in the imagery of the pen, modest and self-reliant, conscientious, honourable and upright, what better and nobler mission could he have chosen, what happier and more felicitous profession!

Even the correspondent of a daily paper has time—at least once in his life—to fall in love. Besides, it is a thing so soon done. Edgar Leslie, however, was not the man, had his leisure been pastoral, to fall in love more than once in his life. Let us hope, then, that his chance was good. It was certainly not prudent in a worldly sense; for the young lady had no money, and no expectations whatsoever. A newspaper writer fortunately is seldom a man of luxurious views and habits. He can, and does, marry on three or four hundred pounds a-year. Even if he goes to dinners and parties, he is not expected to give many in return. He has great opportunities of affording his wife some luxuries which much wealthier ladies cannot or do not attain. He has tickets and admissions for operas and theatres, balls and entertainments of every kind. He is gene-

rally a welcome guest. He mixes in the most intellectual and delightful society, that is, if he chooses to go into Society at all.

In placing his children out in life, he can ask many things for them, which he could not independently solicit for himself. Every one likes to oblige a journalist, if he can. But we should not recommend a vain, frivolous, extravagant woman to marry a writer dependent upon his pen. In one sense, the girl on whom Edgar Leslie had fixed his affections was admirably suited to him—not in one sense, but in all save one, the absolute impecuniosity in which she rejoiced. We say rejoiced advisedly, because she was so exceedingly happy at this time. At Rome she met the Signora Stellini, who recognised in her little Violet Grimshaw, her former pupil and favourite. Poor Violet was then what Blanche herself had been, a governess in a vulgar and upstart family of rich "snobs." They met on the Pincian Hill one afternoon; and Blanche, as we will now call her, saw at a glance her position, and determined to rescue her from it if she could. She accordingly sent her a note requesting an interview. At first the British matron, who commanded the "young person's" services, demurred. But Blanche sent Edgar Leslie, who had been introduced to her in his professional calling, and with whose intelligence and amiability she was charmed, as her ambassador, and Leslie was not to be refused. At least, he acted like an accomplished diplomatist, and bribed Mrs. Mimnifey with an opera-box, and was wicked enough to pay some delicate attentions to that lady's eldest daughter,

Georgina, who was not a beauty of Giorgione, but a Gorgon of ugliness and conceit. "Miss Grimshaw," he said with truth, "knew a family in England with whom the Signora had formerly been intimate, and she wished to make some particular inquiries," which she did. Blanche had seen in an English newspaper the failure of Grimshaw's speculations recorded in some bitter remarks on his career and death. Her heart had yearned to little Violet, and she regarded their accidental meeting as a special and most providential occurrence. Having speedily arrived at the conclusion, that her ci-devant pupil was wholly unspoiled, and as ingenuous and sweet a girl as she had promised to become, Blanche determined at once to confide to her such particulars of her history, as she deemed prudent and wise. She said nothing of her attempted suicide and rescue, as Violet had never heard the tale.

"And now," she added, smiling, "if you will come to me, I will promise you that whilst I live you shall never want a home. I shall engage your services as my companion, dear child, and offer you double your present salary, without fear that I shall be guilty of an extravagant act. I am apprehensive that you will have to stay a month longer in your present abode; but if my friend Mr. Leslie and I can devise any scheme for an earlier emancipation, you may be sure that we shall do so."

Mr. Leslie did devise a scheme, which we shall narrate in the ensuing chapter, as it deserves one for itself.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MRS. MINNIFEY MEETS A LORD.

"I hate lords," said Bob Smith to us the other day, "because I'm not one of them. But, oh, lord! if I were, that's all! I shouldn't care for much money; one hundred pounds a-year would do just for washing bills and tolls (say eighty-five pounds, since turnpikes are now so nearly abolished). I would live, sir, on the substantial adulation of the middle-class English public—live, like a lord! I would ride tradesmens' horses, drink shopkeepers' wine, kiss their commercial daughters when pretty, get their vulgar cheques cashed, and borrow their dirty 'tin.' When I got old, and *bien rangé*, I would ennoble some Sarah Anne, make her my salle-à-manger, d'ye see? Not so bad, eh?—for a lord."—*From the Note-book of Solomon Trustall, Esq., LL.D.*

MRS. MINNIFEY was a little woman in a constant state of fuss and perspiration, and with a red nose and a profusion of false curls. What took such a woman to Rome? What takes half, nay, three parts, of the travelling British public abroad? It is a national epidemic under which we labour; one of the symptoms of the general softening of the British brain. Mr. Minnifey had made money, and had daughters. Other people went to Rome—the Browns, for example. Miss Minnifey sang in a truly first-rate style to an accompaniment on one of Erard's best pianos. At least, if she did not, her father had been

swindled; for he paid a "sight of money" for the accomplishment, as he told his friends. He was the only person in the world whom that young lady refused constantly to oblige, when he would ask, after his afternoon's nap, for a tune on the "pianner." It is due to Miss Minnifey to say, that she acted under her mother's authority in this objection to gratify her paternal parent. It was part of the elder lady's system to snub her husband in all his inclinations. On this occasion she had sent him to Margate during her continental trip, and engaged the services of a courier by way of male protection. There was one droll little figure the less in the Piazza di Spagna, and one on the Pincian Hill—one English marionette the less in the foreign medley abroad. In one thing Mr. Minnifey would not have offended; at least, during his first continental trip. He would not have worn the fag-end of his wardrobe, and dressed himself in a costume between that of a cockney disciple of Izaak Walton as depicted by "Punch," and a bagman out of work. Foreigners have lately discovered why so many English rush abroad. It is to wear out their old clothes! Mr. Minnifey was much more comfortable at Margate, and Margate was much more comfortable with him, than Rome could possibly have been.

It happened that Edgar Leslie knew a lord. This was a youthful British autocrat, who drove a four-in-hand and hunted at Rome. He was very good-natured, and fond of fun. So Edgar let him into the secret of the Signora's desire for the immediate liberation of Violet from her house of bondage.

Lord Wallowby was introduced to Mrs. Minnifey in due form. He took Miss Minnifey to see St. Peter's on his arm, whilst Edgar and Mrs. Minnifey walked behind. When they entered the sacred fane, Miss Minnifey fell into raptures about the statues, the mosaic work, and the grandeur and wealth of decoration of the whole building. It was this, or any part of it, plus the attentions of a lord, which made Miss Minnifey hysterically poetical and loud on the occasion.

"Yaas," said his groomy lordship, in answer to her demand whether the "coo d'aile" was not sublime, "dollops of marble, ain't there?"

Such a remark from a nobleman who had been at Oxford, if he had not taken his degree, was not intellectual, nor elegant, nor sensible; but Miss Minnifey pressed his arm to her side, and whispered:

"Ah! see, see, my lord!" by which she meant an Italian mode of expressing her accordance with the sentiments which he had uttered.

My lord, however, did his spiriting admirably, so far as the Minnifeys were concerned. He dined with them, made outrageous love to the daughter, talked a mixture of stable slang and drawing-room commonplace to the mother, and after dinner said to the latter, suddenly:

"What a doosid pretty gal your governess is!"

"Do you think so, my lord?" was the answer. "I'm sure we never found it out."

"Dessay not; but she's devilish fine eyes for all that. Regular thorough-bred one, I should say." And his lordship actually walked over to where the

governess was standing, and spoke to her, leaving Mrs. and Miss Minnifey aghast.

"Oh, you low, mean, artful, designing hussy!" she said to herself, or rather thought.

At that moment Edgar Leslie addressed her. "Ah!" he said, "Mrs. Minnifey, I am charged with a message from the Signora Stellini. You know she leaves Rome almost immediately, and that she is about to rob you of Miss Grimshaw, the daughter of her old Staffordshire friends. Well now, could you kindly manage — of course, if it occasions you no inconvenience — to dispense with Miss Grimshaw's services at once; that is, in a day or two? But, perhaps, she will see you herself at Lady Madeiraville's to-morrow night."

"I 'ave not the honour," says Mrs. M., "of Lady Madeiraville's acquaintance, or else I'm sure——"

"Oh! the Signora is sufficiently intimate to ask you; that is, if you'll dispense with a formal invitation," was the ready reply. "Wallowby!" (to that young nobleman) "you'll be at Lady Madeiraville's to-morrow night?"

"Don't know, I'm sure, unless these ladies are going," replied that wicked young Corinthian "pillar of the State." And he strolled over to the other side of the room, where Miss Minnifey was sitting in offended dignity, enraged at the insolence of the "person," meaning Violet, and studying the bitterest insult she could offer her, so soon as the guests should be gone.

It was a strange repetition this, of a passage in Blanche Aubrey's own experience as a governess in

the Grimshaw family; but both sketches we have given of the treatment these young persons received are, we fear, but too common in the families of the wealthy vulgar.

Mrs. Minnifey had now two courses before her. One was to get rid of her governess at once in the manner proposed to her, and go to Lady Madeiraville's party on the strength of it; and the other to keep Violet for the month, in which case she would take care that the impudent minx should not make her appearance before company again. The last plan included vengeance and torture. But Edgar had calculated well on the bait he had thrown out. To be invited to the reception of a peeress and ex-cabinet minister's wife! It was too much to lose.

"When," she said, in her blandest tones, those in which she had been accustomed to address the customers in her husband's ironmonger's shop, "does the Signora Stellini leave the Eternal City for 'ler beller Firencey'?" by which she meant Florence, we presume.

"Dopo domani," replied Edgar, rather maliciously. When ignorant persons affect to speak in a foreign language which they do not understand, they deserve to be answered "after their folly." As the lady merely stared at him in reply, he added, "The day after to-morrow, I believe."

"Then," said Mrs. Minnifey, "tell the Signora Stellini, with my compliments, that my governess, Miss Grimshaw, will be at her disposal early on that day, and I'll speak as to the young woman's character when I see her at Lady Madeiraville's to-morrer

evening. Between you and I," she said, "I don't think she'll find her a very suitable person; but, of course, she knows her own business best. You may mention that she has twenty pound a-year with me, and finds her own washing. It's a good deal more than many ladies would like to give her for all the good she is, you know. I mention this, because I should not like her to impose on the liberality of a furrener."

It was with a strong effort that Edgar conquered his indignation and disgust. But he had learned early to check the display of his feelings in a somewhat severe school of training.

"Very good, madam!" he said, "I will acquaint the Signora with your kind determination. Come, Wallowby," he said to the young nobleman, who was languidly amusing himself by trotting out the confiding daughter of the house of Minnifey, late of the Victoria-road, Pimlico. "Come, Wallowby, I am sorry to tear you away, but I think you are scarcely aware of the hour. The time flies by so rapidly, when——"

He had not the face to finish his sentence, which made it all the more effective. As for Violet, she had been banished on the first opportunity, after Lord Wallowby had spoken to her. There was no chance Edgar saw of her coming down again. So he and Wallowby bade their adieux in a most gushing manner, both to "mare and filly," as the young lord called the pair, as soon as he got outside the door.

"And a beauty she is," he said; "rather gummy about the hocks I should think. I say, old fellow

what are you going to stand for this? A 'mezzo caldo,' and a 'Polonia principe,' is the least I'll take. Not bad that about the principe, ay? You can put that in the next 'special' if you like."

The Principe Polonia had the monopoly of Roman cigars at that period. We are afraid that attenuated joke did find its way into the columns of the "Morning Blight." But not through Edgar Leslie; since that was not the journal to which he was attached. The fact is, that his lordship went about for a whole week asking all his English acquaintances for a cigar, in order to indulge his humour at the expense of Polonia, tobacconist and prince.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A STORY THAT NEVER GROWS OLD.

"Marry without love?" I never said anything of the kind, young man. But there are plenty of nice girls with money as well, whom you can love just as much, if you don't see the necessity of being a fool, sir, a fool! And I'll tell you what, sir, the love that comes after marriage is of a much more enduring quality, than most of that which goes before. The woman who runs away with a man is just as likely to run away from him, when she takes it into her head. Of course, your case is different from all others. "An angel," eh? Why, sir, they employ two hundred in the pantomime at Covent Garden alone! And what's more, they look it every night for three months at least, and yours wouldn't last out the honeymoon, no, nor a week. There, don't stare as if you would knock down a grey-headed old man. God bless you, my dear boy, I wish I could be such a happy young idiot again. "Married at Gretna Green?" Of course I was. But that's no reason why I shouldn't give you good advice, which I never knew a young man take yet, and don't expect I shall at my time of life.—*Precepts and Examples.*

So Mrs. Minnifey lost the only attraction of her house either to lord or commoner, and an admirable and patient "gouvernante" and companion, or rather "help," at the low figure of twenty pounds a-year. If any one doubted to what extreme the malignity of baffled vulgarity can go, they should have heard Mrs. M. speak of Violet afterwards, that's all. Ah! if the generous, and the good, and pure-hearted only could know what is said of them, and imputed to

them by the instinctive hatred and mean jealousy of sordid beings, it would sometimes astonish, even if too absurd and far-fetched to shock their minds. Yet a chance shaft will sometimes wound and rankle. A Feejee Islander, watching the operations of an astronomer, is not wider in his surmises of the truth than base souls are in their estimate of the actions, motives, and even language of those whose virtues are above their intelligence, and beyond their ken. Mrs. Minnifey knew Violet to be the daughter of a bankrupt, and vaguely attached something of dishonesty to her character. "Ah!" she would say, "*it* will come out some day." What that *it* was, it might have puzzled her to define. She actually looked upon the gentle, innocent girl as a creature of the predatory class that ought to be kept under. "Set her up, indeed!" she would say, a phrase which means, if it has any specific meaning, that if such-and-such a person were "set up," the speaker would be very happy to knock him or her down; but if once "set up" fairly out of reach, then vulgarity and malignity readily change their tone; as, for instance, after the marriage of a governess to a lord. Long after Mrs. Minnifey knew that Violet was married to an untitled individual, she intimated her belief that she was Lord Wallowby's cast-off mistress. "A very intimate friend of ours at Rome, you know," she would say, "although I have heard he was sadly gay; but you can't wonder at that, for his father was a great friend of George the Fourth, quite intimate, I assure you." This was meant to be an excuse for the modern Wallowby's peccadilloes.

"Well, if noblemen will be noblemen, it is no reason why bankrupt people's daughters should throw themselves in their way. I am sure if I had been the Countess of Poldoddery, his mother, one of the dearest old ladies I ever knew, and not a bit of pride about her—I should have been quite concerned to have seen such goings on. I should very soon have taken him out of her way, had I been in her ladyship's place, I can tell you. And that girl, who hadn't three dresses to her back, sent her salary to a riffraff brother in London, as soon as it was due. I call it shameful, that's what I do."

It is astonishing what different views different people take of the same things, and how a few paltry circumstances will guide these views. Mrs. Minnifey had one of the tenderest of hearts, as she and many of her friends said: she was an original subscriber to the "Refuge for Deserted Cats," and "them all the dissolutists of Toms," as her own housemaid, one of the most impudent girls that a workhouse ever sent forth, observed. Mrs. Minnifey would weep over Thaddeus of Warsaw, as many better people have done before her; but she would persecute a poor, unprotected, beautiful, amiable girl with the bitterness of an enraged fish-fag to the death.

Happily, however, Violet found a home, a friend, and a lover, all at once, and like the delicate flower whose name she bore, breathed the fragrance of life, and light, and joy again. The Signora did not leave Rome for a week longer than she intended, owing to the earnest prayers of the *impresario* of the Tordinone Opera House.

During that week, there were excursions to Tivoli and Albano. During that week, Miss Minnifey was disenchanted, and Cinderella had her innings of bliss. As for Mrs. Minnifey, she told the domestics of the hotel in the loudest tone, every morning, on the stairs, that she was not at home to Lord Wallowby, long after that horsey young patrician had ceased definitively to call; nay, we must speak the truth, after he had, to use his own polite phraseology, "cut the old girl as dead as a herring," in the Corso, twice in the same afternoon. We could not find it in our hearts to excuse such rudeness on the part of a nobleman; but for two or three little hateful traits of character which the ex-ironmonger's lady had displayed. In the first place, she condescended to cheat Violet out of nearly a quarter's miserable salary, as the last three months of her services had not been completed by a few days when she left. In the next, she sent a vindictive verbal message to the Signora's house, after she had seen Violet radiant and happy in an Opera-box, and seated by the brilliant artiste's side in her daily drives. "Mrs. Minnifey's compliments, and would be glad to know, if the young woman as was governess hadn't taken away a pearl brooch, and a valuable Hindian shawl by mistake?" Of course, these things had never been missing, but had been purposely hidden by that vulgar and vindictive matron. Of course, a suitable reply was sent back and an apology demanded and enforced. Are such things possible? Yes, we have known such a woman deliberately bring false charges of robbery against the poor servant whom she had ill treated and starved, in

order to avoid payment of her wages, and out of general malignant spite, whilst her viperous daughter assisted her in the horrible treachery practised against the characters of girls dependent for their food and existence on their good name. We have known, we say, such a bloodless vampire of domestic life, who preyed in this manner on relays of hapless girls, whom an evil destiny betrayed into her unhallowed clutch.

Blanche took good care that Violet should never hear of the brutal outrage of which the enraged Mrs. Minnifey had been guilty. But, even if she had known it, we question whether such drop of vulgar poison would have mingled with the contents of that cup of joy which made her last week at Rome one exquisite holiday of delight to her young orphan soul. Just two days before the Signora left for Florence, she paid a farewell visit to Tivoli, where the whole party remained that night at the Albergo of the Signor Salvi, so well known to tourists of every land. After dinner they took a moonlight stroll, and the Signora was easily persuaded to pour forth the thrilling melody of more than one exquisite cavatina and Neapolitan barcarole. On that occasion Edgar and Violet lingered a little behind the rest, and then he passed his arm round her slender waist, and told her that oft-repeated tale, which is ever fresh as the bloom of roses, that blush in summer time anew. Has not every rose a separate beauty and a separate life? Is not every first love a fresh rose in a new world? Did anything worthy of life or its records ever exist, so far as they are concerned, before

the declaration of the last young true lover to his chosen love? Was not the world made and pre-ordained for them up to that precise moment, when, in the conscious fulness of ecstatic joy, they bless all things, and unconsciously bless God? Surely to love entirely and perfectly is the supreme obedience of the soul. It is a moment of profound wisdom, for we should, indeed, be unwise to forego it, considering that it can never come again; and of profound folly, for we are never so silly in our lives, especially if a third party be witness of the ridiculous scene. It is a brief experience of such perfect bliss, that we are not sure if two human beings actually exchanging the first kiss of first love, ought not instantly to be slain. They never can be so happy again. They may live to repent, to hate each other, to repeat the emotion second-hand, and degrade it into a mere imposture and pretence. They may live to make love like the beasts of the field, and something infinitely worse, when settlements and income have to do with the surrender of maiden charms. First love has no second thought—it has nothing to do with the world, except so far as skies and stars, and seas and flowers, are concerned; the murmur of streams, the song of birds and a convenient trysting-place, where that delicious nonsense, so superior to the highest philosophy of this earth, can be talked and whispered, unobserved by all the human race—especially an angry father, or a plotting mamma. To be sure, there are a variety of first lovers and first loves. There are some who obey the great law of nature blindly and without much inspiration. There are men who

waste the aroma of existence upon coquettes; or, worse still, there are girls who lavish the bloom of life upon libertines or fustian scoundrels armed with tinsel sentiment and Cupid's artificial slang. There is, alas! that we should say so, the love hight calf. He is generally slaughtered on the altar of Anteros, the false god. Your male calf of this description grows up, too, not unfrequently into dissolute maturity, or a respectable commercial animal of the domestic kind. But when the first love of two tender and impassioned beings is worthily exchanged, and fortune is propitious, when these two combine the best sentiments of Moore and Burns, and not only "climb the hill (of life) together," but "love on till they die," the Paradise of two such young persons is somewhat antedated, that is all. Such lovers were our Edgar and Violet; and when the first kiss of their love was exchanged, a serpent in the rustling foliage near them raised his scaly crest and flat head with an unnoticed hiss, and glided swiftly out of their neighbourhood into the darkness afar.

With what pity did the lovers regard the interlocutors in a conversation about love that evening round the supper-table.

The Signora herself had declared that she feared that it was almost impossible to find two persons blest either by circumstance, or themselves, with a pure and prosperous love to the end of human life.

"Perfectly impossible!" quoth Mr. Howard, an old English gentleman, who lived chiefly on the Continent, and enjoyed himself without a home. "There is no such thing. I confess it to be my notion of a

possible state of happiness hereafter. There may be a sort of humdrum connubial felicity between persons without imagination. But we don't take stock of these in the High Court of Cupid."

The Signora sighed. She, at least, had found in her own experience, that the best apparently secured happiness may be destroyed by a ruthless kick at the conjugal talisman.

"Love," pursued Mr. Howard, "is Boyhood's Religion, Manhood's Doubt, and the Scepticism of Old Age." And he looked round triumphantly as if he had settled the question by an epigram, such as it was. "Your love-match is always a mistake," he continued. "You might as well attempt to light the cigar of felicity at a catharine-wheel."

"No doubt," said Edgar, laughing, "in the view of those who are content to look upon smoking and travelling by vetturino as the true solace of life. For my part, I believe that all, save love-matches, are dowered with misery. They commence with self-humiliation, and end with outrage, or a frigid compact and treaty of contempt."

"Love-matches commence with poverty very often," replied Mr. Howard, "and end with hatred and disaster. Let love—such as should be in the sensible union of sensible people—come after marriage. There is some chance then that it will last."

"No!" said the Signora, "I am convinced that among all false proverbs there is none so false as that. Love may come after marriage, but then it is seldom for the husband or the wife."

"And pray," said Mr. Howard to Edgar, "since you have spoken of travelling, what is life save a journey and an ache? A tooth-ache, an ear-ache, a stomach-ache, and a heart-ache—every sort of ache? Time is the coachman who drives faster every succeeding stage, whilst his passengers get stiffer and stiffer in their limbs. Those who travel most, see most, and thereby at least live longest in sensation. Those who remain at home, do one monotonous stage over and over again. The last inn is the sign of the "Jolly Sexton." At the houses of refreshment on the road, those who have money have seldom any hunger and thirst, and those who have are generally without the means. Depend upon it, man is best alone on such a journey. Who would travel with brats?"

"You wicked old bachelor!" cried Edgar. "Continue, and condemn yourself for ever in our eyes. What about friendship?"

"Friendship," replied the cynic, "is a fragile structure, built of visiting-cards, blown down by the lightest breath that frames a request to borrow ten pounds."

"And what are your views of future happiness?" rejoined Edgar. "I am inclined to think that a man who does not believe in love must be an atheist."

"A promissory note," was the reply, "drawn upon eternity, and made payable nowhere. Belief is the interest at blank per cent. In one respect it is like a railway insurance ticket. You must be

destroyed, before it has a chance of being honoured. And who knows whether it will be found upon you after death?"

"Go on!" replied Edgar. "I like to know the complete notions of a man who does not believe in love."

"In love! yes, but what is love?" replied the other. "A double selfishness, a vicious tumult of the imagination. Its passion does not elevate us above any of the animal race. It is not proof against small-pox, age and poverty, nor will it survive possession. Reciprocal love is next to impossible in a permanent state. Supposing a man and woman to be created for each other, how are they likely to meet among nine hundred millions of souls. Depend upon it, a man never meets with his ideal. Ideal is the contrary to real. All the great love-stories of the world are founded upon tragedies and comedies of error. Besides, a man never knows what he really likes, until he gets too old. When the judgment becomes mature, if it ever does, it is time to die."

"Nay," said the Signora, "you do not hear of the happy marriages. It is their very essence not to court publicity, not to be known or thought of outside the domestic home. I feel that all you have said is nothing, and that you do not believe in it yourself."

"I do not, fair lady," was the gallant reply; "but I thought these young people might learn something from me" (looking at Edgar and Violet). "I wished to show them what a dreadful example a man may

become who has missed his own chance of happiness, and envies that of others. Nay, I believe that at some period of their lives the worst human beings are capable of love, which is the greatest argument I know against eternal punishment."

"Then," said the Signora, "you have been imposing upon us all this time with these atrocious sentiments of yours. I hardly know what punishment to inflict."

"Alas! madam," said Mr. Howard, in a tone which set all laughing, "I was sufficiently punished when I first saw you. Then, indeed, I met at last with my ideal of perfection, and no one can pretend for a moment that my devotion met with the reciprocity which it deserved."

"Do you really think there is any truth in what that horrid old thing said?" whispered Violet to Edgar, just before they parted for the night. "Because, if there is—if you could ever—— Oh, Edgar! tell me, speak!"

"It is not worth an argument," said Edgar. "We know it is false—at least I do; do you not? But, if I must really tell you what I think——"

"Oh! yes, yes!" was the answer, as she clung imploringly to his extended arm.

"Then this is the only answer which I deign to give." And so saying he caught her to his heart, and imprinted a fervent kiss upon her lips.

It was wonderful what exuberance of style and diction, what an ecstatic *réjouissance* of thought, pervaded a letter which appeared in the paper of

which Edgar Leslie was foreign correspondent a few days after that date. He wreathed the well-worn monuments of classic Rome with laurels and roses, strewed the Appian Way with flowers, and pictured the liberation of the Eternal City by the illustrious Garibaldi in a manner truly delightful to read in the prosaic counting-houses of London merchants and City men.

# CHAPTER X.

## ON THE BANKS OF THE ARNO.

Nella quale dopo la dimostrazione fatta dall' Autore, perchè cagione avvenisse di doversi quelle persone che appresso si mostrano, ragunare a ragionare insieme sotto il reggimento di *Bianca* si ragiona quello che più aggrada a ciascheduno.

Affinities, Sympathies, Attractions, Coincidences, and Dreams have more to do with the moulding of our every-day life, than the most superstitious would like to confess. One thing is certain, which is, that the greatest men and those who have exercised the most powerful influence over their fellow-mortals have been particularly susceptible to the influences of the mysterious middle-world and of the dim and fantastic revelations of that *Crepuscule* of the soul half-way between the midnight of utter Knownothingism and the dawn of Eternal Light.—*Œuvres de Polyanthe*, tome iii. c. viii.

"Was there more mesmerism, more subtle electric influence at work, more supernatural development, in the earlier days of the world? If there were, might it not account for many of the features of the heathen mythology, its miracles and oracles, its visions and revelations, its gods and goddesses, lares and lemures, fauns and satyrs, nymphs and dryads, and the general peopling of inanimate nature with semi-divine or demoniac existence, from the 'parting genius,' sent with sighing from his haunt at the dawn of the Christian era, to the larvæ skulking about some lonesome tomb? In the Middle Ages

you have it still, though in a far wilder and fainter degree. By-the-bye, have you ever read that most exquisite poem of Thomas Hood, the 'Plea of the Midsummer Fairies?' How thoroughly unappreciated was the nobler genius, the better half of that man, the last great poet, with the exception of Tennyson, whom England can boast. And Tennyson is completely *sui generis*, and all his host of imitators ought to be kicked."

Such was the manner in which a young and good-looking gentleman, of some twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, rambled on, to a mixed party, chiefly of English, seated at a picnic in the grounds of a villa about half-way up the mount that was crowned by the ancient city of Fiesole.

The spot had been well chosen for the purpose which had brought that goodly company together. It was a level space surrounded by marble benches, so arranged that in the sunniest day of August they were more than half in shade. A wall of live oak, with the crisp shiny leaves that distinguish that tree, rose to a height of some twenty feet, and was scored out at intervals in the shape of niches to receive statues of Ceres, Pomona, Flora, and others, which thus became silent but not inappropriate spectators of the rural feast.

The outer ridge of the platform was protected by a balustrade, also of white marble, on which appeared vases of the same stone, of the graceful Etruscan form, bearing dwarf aloes, which might have been coeval with the vases themselves, so little attention do they need in that genial atmosphere.

Although the grounds continued for some distance beyond this spot, no more of them were visible, and the eye travelled on right across the Val d'Arno, till it lighted upon the fair city—*Fiorenza la bella*—and the picturesque mountains on the other side of the valley.

The air was so clear that he who knew the topography of the city might have pointed with his finger to its many palaces of historic fame. But to the glance of the least learned were revealed the richly-tinted Campanile standing beside Brunelleschi's dome, the bold steeple of the Palazzo Vecchio, the square tower of the Bargello, and further to the right the rugged façade of the Palazzi Pitti. These stood out in sharp relief from the surrounding buildings; and beyond the city—forming an admirable background—appeared the heights of San Miniato, Poggio Imperiale, Bello Sguardo, and Monte Oliveto, whose very names were suggestive of the loveliness of which they possessed so large a share.

And over all was one of the clearest of Italian skies; the air was rich with the perfume of orange blossom, jessamine, and the subtle-sweet *gaggier;* the green-backed lizards ran swiftly in the sunshine, and from a grove hard by the nightingales poured forth a flood of song.

The conversation, commenced in the way shown at the opening of our chapter, fell, as it is often wont to do, upon spiritualism, supernatural visitants, and such topics. No one in answer to the first speaker attempted to advocate any of the would-be copyists

of the Tennysonian school, which went far to show that there were no pretenders and impostors present.

"Upon my word, Mr. Leslie," said a pleasant old gentleman, with white hair and a fresh colour, "I think we are in danger of reverting to both heathenism and its mythology at once. No superstition of the Middle Ages approaches, in my opinion, in delirious folly this mania of spirit-rapping. I can't say that I have seen anything extraordinary myself, save the credulity and imposture connected with it. Have any of you?"

The response was in the negative. Every one knew somebody who had witnessed the most marvellous things.

"All I know is," said the first speaker, "that I have assisted at two *séances*, one amateur, the other professional, and found both utter failures. The latter was at the chambers of a late eminent journalist, in the Temple. The chief male professor was a kind of spiritual Yankee Squeers. He had with him the most weird-looking youth I think I ever saw as a medium. He looked like an imaginary Edgar Poe's corpse stolen by resurrection-men and galvanised especially for the occasion, or Paganini's youngest brother, kept awake for a fortnight by the fiendish cruelty of his brother, who had played to him the whole time a fantasia del diavolo on one string, and wouldn't let him sleep."

"But poor Paganini himself," interrupted Miss Violet, "must have been awake all the time, too."

"Matter-of-fact young lady," cried Leslie, laugh-

ing, "was he not a supernatural personage—at least on the violin?"

"Well, as I was about to tell you, the whole thing was a failure, and the professor's wife scornfully told us that the 'sperrits was angry with such a blasphemious and unbelieving lot,' as we were. The livid youth with long hair had only impressed us with pity for his forlorn and imbecile state. We wondered if they starved him, and whether we ought to interfere. We held a brief *séance* of our own in the next room, when it was put to the vote, whether the professor and another man of the party ought not to be kicked down-stairs. But the majority agreed that it would be a breach of good faith and hospitality, as he had been invited to come and show us what he could do. So we paid him and let him go, with a caution, I can tell you. The amateur affair was worse. It was at a small literary club. There was collusion at the table, and two if not three dupes. I soon saw the artifice, and at first assisted in the fraud, and then turned the proceedings to fun. There was much talk of a certain cold hand which was to appear and touch the cheek of the chief dupe. But it didn't. If it had, I should have grasped it, had I thereby upset table and all. I have no doubt that it would have turned out to be a wax hand at the end of a wire. The room was darkened. I left them about four oclock A.M., and never felt more disgusted in my life at the wickedness and folly of the whole performance. Very soon after, the young man whom I have called the chief dupe, and who was gifted with remarkable but

precocious talent, died. His whole nervous system was upset.

"Perhaps he took opium, or other stimulants," said the old gentleman.

"Very likely," responded the other.

"Well," said La Stellini, whose English was pronounced with a slightly foreign accent, which imparted a peculiar charm to the rich tones of her voice, "I for one admit that I am exceedingly superstitious, especially as regards omens and dreams. I would not sit down one of thirteen at table if I could help it."

"And I never walk under a ladder," cried Sir Robert Warkworth, a young English baronet.

"And my English maid wouldn't break a looking-glass for the world," said the Signora, looking towards Susan, who was playing at a short distance with little Arthur.

"Very proper superstition that," said Mr. Howard, the old gentleman, who had already spoken. "I wish that servants would extend it to drinking-glasses, and especially old china. Let us encourage that superstition by all means; but I'll tell you a story just now about thirteen at table, a singular coincidence which I witnessed myself."

"Let's all tell a story," cried Violet, clapping her hands; "that is, every one except me, for I don't know a single one, I declare. You shall tell one for me," she said to young Leslie. "Won't you?"

"In this light and this cheerful society, I don't mind it," said La Stellini; "but I object to ghost

tales at night, especially when one is going to bed in a spacious and old-fashioned room. Allons, messieurs! Come, Signor Edgardo, you shall begin."

The party crowded round the young journalist, who, casting a look at Violet, as if to see that she was sufficiently near to insure his perfect felicity, commenced:

"Once upon a time——"

"Oh, that won't do, if you please," interrupted Violet, "it must be quite a modern story, and perfectly true."

"Well, then," said Edgar, "I will try again. My grandmother was a woman of the strong-minded school——"

"Bother your grandmother!" said the baronet, "with all due respect, I mean, but that's much too long ago."

"It must be a story," said Mr. Howard, "about something which has happened either to yourself or some one whom you know say within the last thirty years."

All laughed at this margin, extending, as it did, some five or six years beyond the age of the proposed narrator.

"Well, then," responded Edgar; "but it must be a melancholy story, you know."

"You can't easily have a funny ghost-story, if it is true," said a young lady. Thus duly admonished, Edgar Leslie commenced his tale, and told it exceedingly well. As, however, it was one of a somewhat common type of "real" ghost stories, we shall not give it here.

The usual comments were made about it, and everybody tried to explain it in the usual sensible way, with the exception of the Signora, who looked unusually pale.

"I see," said Edgar to her, "that you are not a sceptic; and yet I dare say there is not one of these bold unbelievers who would like to pass the night in a church, or even in a picture gallery, alone."

"Faith! I should think not, indeed," said little Major O'Reilly, an officer of the Pope's Noble Guard at Rome. "My grandfather, for his sins, once got locked up in Westminster Abbey all night. I don't know what took him there at all, seeing that he was a Catholic, unless it was a pretty girl that he had followed in, maybe to convert her; but I believe he saw a sheriffs' officer outside the door, as he was coming out, and he went back and stayed there so long, that he got fastened in."

"And what happened to him?" "Was he frightened?" "Did he see anything?" "I should have gone out of my senses." "What did he do?" were some of the various questions and remarks made by the ladies of the assembled party.

"The divil himself wouldn't have frightened Pat O'Reilly," said the major, "unless he had come in the likeness of a process-server with a writ. What did he do? Why he whistled and sang; and, as he had plenty of leisure, I dare say he tried to come to a conclusion whether he liked fair ladies or dark best —which is what I once tried myself in quarantine."

"And what conclusion did you arrive at, major?" asked the Signora.

"Well, ma'am," replied O'Reilly, "I found it depinded entirely on the complexion of the angel I saw last."

"And did nothing happen to your grandfather, then, after all?" inquired Violet, in a disappointed tone.

"Tare an' ouns! I ask your pardon, miss, for the expression; something did happen to him, that very nearly prevented my telling you the story; for it was a mercy he ever lived to marry my grandmother at all, at all."

"Do tell us, major, did he see anything?" asked Violet.

"He saw so many things, my dear young lady, that it was a miracle he ever set eyes on a sheriffs' officer again. I tell you he was chased all round the building by——"

"By spectres and hobgoblins, of course?" said Edgar, laughing at the major, who was quietly taking his snuff at this exciting point of his story.

"Spectres!" said the major, derisively. "Daymons, is it ye're after? I can tell you he'd rather have been hunted in that place by all the bailiffs in England, with the Lord Chancellor at their head, or a pack of jealous women led by Biddy Flanagan herself, to whom he promised marriage at Ballyhoolagan, than be hunted as he was."

"But what on earth was it, eh?" asked Mr. Howard.

"It was just getting dark," said the major; "and my grandfather had got tired of walking round and looking at the statues, and the inscriptions were

getting too dim for him to puzzle at them any longer, and so he laid down very comfortably in a nook, said his prayers, crossed himself, wished for a pipe of tobacco, and went to slape like a Christian gentleman."

"Well?" they all said.

"He awoke, fancying something was tugging at his toes, as he said, like the ghost of the gout, and perceived the moonlight streaming in through the windows, and casting fantastic shadows around; and then he heard a strange gibbering, squeaking sound, and a number of dusky forms were scurrying and hurrying about, and darting from point to point. They were——" Here the major took another long pinch of snuff—"what do you think?"

A pause ensued, when one young lady timidly suggested "Vampires," and another, "Ghouls."

"The ghosts of departed sheriffs' officers and sponging-house keepers condemned to play at prisoners' base," suggested Edgar.

"It's not exactly there I'd look for them, anyhow," observed the major, dryly. "Can't any of ye guess?"

No one responded, and the major said, "What d'ye think of rats?"

"Rats!" cried the ladies with one breath.

"Rats! by scores, and hundreds, and thousands! for all I know," was the answer.

"How horrid!" "Whatever did the poor man do?" "I declare I should have fainted," &c. &c., were the various feminine exclamations heard.

"It wasn't my grandmother, luckily," said the

major, "or it's very likely she would. My ancestor had very little time to deliberate. As far as he could judge, the enemy were mustering, or holding a council of war. Before he could well clap his hat firmly on his head, and get up, the whole body charged him in column. Helter, skelter, one over another, score over score, by sections and companies, with small shrill fierce squeaks, on they came, and off he went, round and round the building; more than once he slipped and almost fell. Then he nearly broke his neck by catching his foot in some projecting part of a recumbent effigy. Never was such a chase before or since, as a mad Irishman hunted by a legion of rats in the ould abbey that night. Now and then he felt them leap against his legs, but he couldn't stop to kick out—he hadn't breath to spare to shout, and if he had, it would have been useless. Suddenly, as he came round in the broad light of the moon opposite the side from which she shone upon that frightful but fantastic race, he perceived——"

"What!" they all cried, male as well as female listeners this time.

"That the rats had divided their forces with infernal generalship, and that he was met by a column in front."

"Good Heavens, sir!" said Mr. Howard, who had got excited, "how then did he manage to escape?"

"He was a fine young active fellow, who had taken an eagle's nest in the Kerry mountains in his day. He paused a moment, kicked out desperately with his riding-boots left and right at the foremost files of the enemy, looked around him, saw in an

instant that he had stopped at the foot of a lofty and emblematical monument, made a dash at it, and in a moment was seated triumphantly with his legs firmly clutched round the neck of an effigy of Fame or Britannia rewarding some defunct hero with a stone or marble wreath. The rats came swarming up and actually reached his feet. He managed to pull off a boot and kept hitting the topmost with it, until they got tired of the game. Nor did he, I assure you, lave his perch, until early dawn. I don't like to state anything that is not perfectly true; but I was told that my ancestor having dropped the boot, after a vain effort to draw it on again, the rats carried it off as a trophy, and that he consequently cut a quare figure in the morning when the abbey doors were opened by the astonished vergers. Had he met with a sheriffs' officer then, he would have found some difficulty in retreating."

"Couldn't he have taken off the other boot?" asked Edgar, thoughtfully.

"Is it really true?" inquired a young lady of the party.

"My grandfather said so," replied the major, "and few men liked to dispute his word. He did fight one duel with a professor of natural history from Dublin on the subject."

"How was that?" asked Sir Robert.

"Well, you see the professor showed some symptoms of unbelief. He had formerly been demonstrator of anatomy at St. Thomas's, which may have had something to do with the matter. But the professor apparently gave in at last, and they were

about to drink each other's health—the discussion took place in a tavern, you must know—when an unhappy incident put an end to a peaceful solution of the matter."

"And what might that be?" inquired Edgar.

"My grandfather asked the professor, who was a bit of a wag it would seem, what liquor he preferred, and he answered 'Ratafia.' That settled the matter. They met in Battersea Fields, and my grandfather, who swore his adversary should never wear both boots again, shot him in the left knee, and thus kept his promise."

"But are people — I mean other people — ever attacked in this way? Was any one ever really eaten?"

"A few choristers and charity-boys occasionally, I believe," said Edgar, "who get locked in at play; but they are supposed to have run off to sea, and no one cares to inquire about them."

"Don't be such a wretch," said a young lady.

"I did know a case," observed Mr. Howard, "where one of those miserable beings who get their living by raking the sewers in London, suffered his light to be extinguished, or had the misfortune to drop his lantern. Nothing was found of him the next day but his bones, his implements of work, and a box of Holloway's ointment. The voracity of these creatures is only equalled by their intelligence."

"It was a tacit rebuke to the memory of the deceased Lord Aldborough," remarked the incorrigible Edgar.

"Or rather a voice from the sewers," added Sir Robert. "Come, Mr. Howard, you've finished your cigar. Give us your story of the thirteen at dinner, and I'll tell you an anecdote of the Temple, for the truth of which I can vouch. I don't mean the Temple at Paris, Signora!" he said to La Stellini, "but a sort of bachelor residence of barristers, avvocati, you know, in London—a very romantic place, I assure you, where adventure abounds. Imagine the license of the barrack combined with the educated subtlety of the law, and you can form some notion of what it is. A cloister without monastic restrictions in the heart of London; quaint old edifices of the last three centuries, Anne upon Elizabeth in architecture, patched and renovated by the Georges, and rebuilt when they threaten to fall, or when a portion is burnt down by a judge, for instance, who puts his candle under his bed, even up to the present time, in any sort of style. Trees, and gardens, and a fountain, and sun-dials ornament a spot which you might people in imagination with ladies in sacques and periwigged gallants wearing swords and lace ruffles, all of the olden time. Imagine, too, the din of the streets shut out, the broad river, looking at least picturesque by night, sweeping by, with its barges, and piers, and steamers, and a glimpse of bridges, over which Commerce is ever creeping with its ant-like multitude, and their gigantic bales, and you have some idea of our London Temple, where I have the privilege to reside, when not, as at present, indulging in my annual vacation ramble."

"I have seen it," said the Signora, after a pause, "and remember well the air of what you call mouldy solitude which is so striking in the very heart of your great, and, pardon me, I think, overgrown London. Come, signor" (to Howard), "let us have your story of the Tredici. I am impatient to learn it."

"Udire ed obbedire," said that gentleman, whose Italian usually dispensed with anything like idiom, even if it ever achieved accent or grammar. "Cominciamo!" and he commenced:—

"I was invited, not long since, to dine at a certain much-frequented tavern, by Colonel C., the American, of fire-arm fame. Two of the guests, one the well-known Tom Rokely, secretary to I don't know how many institutions, and connected with science and the drama in the most wonderfully practical, and busy manner, declared their great regret at being obliged to leave very early; indeed, they feared they should not be able to remain even to the end of the substantial part of the entertainment. Suddenly it was discovered that there were thirteen at dinner, and some one foolishly said that the first person who left the table would die within three months. After a time, it became perceptible that neither Tom Rokely nor the other gentleman, whose name I forget, showed the slightest inclination to depart. No one, of course, wished them to go; but a great deal of what is vulgarly termed chaff—badinage, I mean—took place. Our host endeavoured to silence this in vain.

"'Why, Rokely,' said one, 'it is nearly ten o'clock. I declare you'll be too late for the new piece!'

"'I say, Smith' (for so I will call him), said another, 'you've forgotten your appointment!'

"These gentlemen, of course, declared that the company was so delightful, they could not tear themselves away. Well, it got towards the time when all must necessarily have taken their departure, and somehow no one seemed at all anxious to stir. An irrepressible individual, who sat next to me, and who had been very pointed in his remarks, had just proposed, I remember, that the whole party should rise simultaneously, and thus 'cheat the devil,' as he called it; upon which some one else facetiously asked if that would not endanger the whole party; when suddenly General M., an officer of the United States army, and a man of great scientific attainments, rose.

"'Gentleman,' he said, 'I have heard all this foolish talk with some impatience and surprise. I do not think it worthy of this company. For myself, I am prepared to meet my Maker, when it shall please Him to call on me.'

"In this strain he continued for some ten minutes, and then solemnly bowing to his host and the company, he stalked to a side-table, placed his broad-brimmed hat upon his head, advanced to the door, faced about, bowed solemnly again, and retired. We all remained looking at each other with surprise. Never had a wet blanket been more effectually applied to the joviality of a convivial lot, except, madam" (turning to the Stellini) "perhaps in that scene in 'Lucrezia Borgia,' an opera which you have so wonderfully embellished with your exquisite

performance, when the monks are heard chanting a funeral service by the doomed and startled guests. At length, Colonel C. broke the silence by requesting some one to pass the wine, and we began to talk about the General's extraordinary demeanour and speech. I should have told you that the General was a man still in the prime of life, with a colour like a rose, and ordinarily as cheerful and cheery a gentleman as you could find, full of dry humour, and exceedingly fond of a joke. On this occasion his tall and commanding person, his forbidding and almost sepulchral accents, and the strange solemnity and severity of his address, exercised an influence over us all, which we in vain tried to throw off. I remember saying to my lively neighbour, that it seemed as if the General had pronounced his own funeral oration, and that he was what the Scotch call 'fey.'

"'I shall certainly take especial notice if he dies within the time,' whispered he whom I addressed.

"Our host got up and proposed General M.'s health, and passed a merited eulogy on his career, character, and services. 'I think,' he said, smiling, 'that he has got a tooth-ache to-day. I never saw him in such a humour before.' We could not, however, succeed in restoring the joviality of the party, which soon after broke up. It is a fact," continued Mr. Howard, "that within three months General M. died very suddenly, and, as I understood, with no premonitory sign; and, what is more, it was on the return home to join an affectionate family, and almost, if not quite, within sight of the quays of

New York. Colonel C., who was much attached to him, could not bear the slightest reference to the fact afterwards, and I don't believe there was one of the company who was not deeply impressed by the circumstance."

"Is it really a fact, Signor Lessingham?" asked the Signora, addressing a young man of a somewhat pensive and Byronic aspect, who sat near her, and who had scarcely ventured an observation during the whole afternoon—"is it really a fact, that there are, or have been, persons in Paris who earn their living by making a fourteenth at these otherwise unlucky repasts?"

"I believe so," was the reply. "At any rate, there is a novel, one of Balzac's, I think, founded on such an alleged practice."

"I fancy," observed Edgar, "that there must be a double intention in such an institution, if it exists. Such an individual, if gifted with great conversational powers and wit, and well furnished with anecdotes and the topics of the day, would, with his continued opportunities of observation, form a capital addition to an ordinary dinner-party."

"So he would," said Howard. "I dare say, if such a man ever did announce his profession, many parties of thirteen would be especially given to afford an excuse for his presence."

"It wouldn't suit English manners," said Sir Robert. "People would never treat him sufficiently as one of themselves."

The speaker was immediately called upon for his contribution to spiritualistic records.

"We were a pleasant little society in the Temple," he said, "and gave ourselves a classical name. We met once a week at each other's chambers alternately, and talked of everything, including law, politics, religion, the belles-lettres, and le beau sexe. Amongst us was a gentleman of confirmed atheistical views—in fact, a materialist—and he had the bad taste constantly to intrude his ideas on the subject. A religious enthusiast is bad enough; but an enthusiastic free-thinker, a man whose religion is utter infidelity, and who endeavours to convert others to his miserable creed, is the worst of all propagandists in this world. It is literally working gratis for the Author of Evil; at least, such is my notion. Even a godless attorney does not directly meddle with the affairs of his victim's soul, does not endeavour to got those title-deeds into his possession as a set-off against a diabolical bill; but a voluntary chaplain of Satan seeks first to make a proselyte of his friend."

"I once knew a man," observed Edgar, "who was both an attorney's clerk and an active propagandist of materialism."

"Good gracious!" said Howard; "and what became of him?"

"Nothing in particular that I know of. He is only doubly 'articled,' that is all," was the reply.

"What an attorney for future Palmers!" cried Howard. "But pray, Sir Robert, continue the story we have interrupted."

"In spite of all," resumed the baronet, "Ritson was a good fellow, and very popular. His cheerful

temper and generous disposition, combined with his great fund of information, and mathematical, chemical, and general knowledge, rendered him in all other respects a desirable companion, as well as an agreeable friend. I may mention that he was about forty years of age, and in good and increasing chamber practice as a barrister. His chambers were in a block of buildings forming an angle with those in which lived the founder of our little institution, the clever, brilliant, caustic and Johnsonian, Wigham Tooke, who wrote the 'History of the Last Century' at twenty-one years of age; the 'eminent Whig statesman,' as we delighted to call him, because of his avowed political principles and connexion with Holland House, and also a contested election which he had stood in early life. At every dissolution of Parliament, and on some other occasions, when a vacancy occurred in a Tory borough, our friend was in the habit of issuing an address based on the most enlightened platform of compromise and pseudo-liberalism of the Bedford type. Their chambers being thus adjoining, and Tooke's being on the second while Ritson's were on the first floor, the former could overlook the latter, as he sat at work daily at a table near the window in his private room. Frequently, after business hours, Tooke would throw open his window and hail Ritson, either to accompany him for a walk, or to proceed with him to dinner. On one occasion, on the Monday after a Saturday night meeting of the 'club,' if I may so call it, at which Ritson, to my astonishment and disgust, for I was present as a guest on the occasion, had indulged

in more than his wonted blasphemies, Tooke met him near the door of the Temple Church, and expressed his surprise that he had not seen him that day from his window sitting at work as usual.

"'Then I don't know where your eyes were,' was the reply; 'for I've only just left chambers, and I've scarcely moved from my accustomed seat since morning.'

"'That's very odd,' replied the other, 'I declare I looked out for you a dozen times, and didn't see you. In fact,' he said, 'you couldn't have been there.'

"'You be hanged!' replied Ritson. 'I'm always there. I'm the most regular and punctual fellow in my habits in the Temple. I don't believe I've missed being in that self-same chair at that self-same table and spot, except in vacation time, Sundays, and holidays, once these last three years; and, what is more, by ——, if God Almighty himself was to try, he couldn't prevent me, and that's all about it. Keep a better look out to-morrow, old fellow, and you'll see me fast enough.'

"'Nonsense!' said Tooke, 'I wish you wouldn't say such things.' And so they parted.

"The next day, Tooke looked out for him, and the day after, and the day after that, in vain; and then he sent his clerk over to inquire after him. The answer was that Mr. Ritson hadn't been very well since Monday. A few days more elapsed, and then Tooke went to see him, and found him cheerful, but very unwell.

"'I shall soon be at work again,' he said. 'Here's my poor old mother quite frightened.' He was an

only and most excellent son, and lived with the old lady. 'You see,' he added, 'it's such an extraordinary thing for me to be laid up. I haven't had a day's illness, since I was a boy.'

"The next time Tooke called, he found him very bad indeed, and quite desponding about himself, though calm and collected, as usual, and even as much inclined to joke as ever. To Tooke's inquiry about his health, he answered, the old lady being present, 'Eheu! moribundus,' and then went off into the current topics of the day. Tooke never saw him again. He died about a week after, having never re-entered his chamber since that sinister conversation."

"And did he repent," asked the Signora, "and ever allude to what he had said?"

"Not he," replied Sir Robert; "I question if he ever remembered or thought of it, but Tooke did, and it very much altered his mode of thinking and expression. Tooke questioned his medical man, a friend of them both, and he said that he went off quite composedly, 'like an angel,' as the old nurse said."

"Then it is not true," said the Signora, "that such people die in frightful agonies."

"Only in tracts, madam, and sermons," said Mr. Howard. "The great Dr. Johnson, one of the chief luminaries of British literature and an eminent pietist, had a painful and degrading dread of death. Some old ladies, who are extremely devout and religious, actually go mad with apprehension of a future state, and in their delirium will take to swearing like

parrots in a public-house. I certainly don't think that a bad conscience would tend to alleviate the pangs of a long illness, or smooth the lingering sufferings of dissolution, let the sinner be never be so hardened."

"Now, Mr. Lessingham," cried two or three young ladies together, clapping their hands, "it's your turn. We expect such a delightful story from you."

The gentleman appealed to started, blushed, and said, "Really ar, I have nothing to tell. My life ar, I may say, has not been without ar—but as for anything very striking or particular beyond a few—what I may call—sympathies ar;" and here he stopped.

"Oh! tell us some," said a young lady, who directly she heard her own voice, looked almost as confused as Lessingham himself.

There was a great deal of good-natured mirth expressed at poor Mr. Lessingham's expense.

"Signor Lessingham means probably some instances of those strange magnetic affinities, those mysterious revelations of the soul, which have some time or other occurred to all of us," said the Signora. "For instance, I have not seen some one for years, and I think of that person, or see some one so like, that it reminds me, and then directly after we meet. The day I saw you, dear child," she said to Violet, "I beheld in the morning a peasant girl, who resembled you, and I thought of you for hours. The moment I ceased to think of you, I met you on the Pincian Hill, with those people, you know."

"And I did not think of you at all, till we met,"

whispered Edgar; "and now I fancy I must have been dreaming of you all my life. But certainly we have met before in some other planet. Did it never occur to you," he said to the Signora aloud, "to fancy that you had done just the same thing before as if in some previous period of existence?"

"It has often," she replied. "For instance, I fancied just now that I had sat in this very place in a story-telling group like this, and seen exactly such a scene—those pines touched with gold, that boat on the river, heard even the distant melody that just now reached my ears. What made you, as it were, divine my very thoughts?"

"Had you been a married couple," said the major, "I'd have understood it in a moment; for I knew a husband and wife that were constantly thinking the same thing at the same moment, and it was sometimes a race which would get the idea out first."

"And how many have you known that don't think alike, more's the pity," asked Howard, "and haven't an idea in common?"

"That's all mighty well," said the major, "but you don't see exactly what I mane. Don't people that live together and are devoted to each other get even to look somewhat alike, to have the same expression, even if the features are different? I tell you I've known them dhrame the same dhrame, and that's something remarkable you'll own. Isn't that affinity or sympathy, if you like?"

"Fancy, a Mr. Brown saying to his wife," cried Howard, "'My dear I dreamt last night we had roast

pork for dinner to-day,' and the lady replying, 'Dear me! how odd, so did I.' What delightful harmony might ensue."

"It is the result of harmony, not the cause, according to the major," observed Edgar. "These are people evidently entitled to the Dunmow flitch."

This necessitated an explanation of the custom to the Signora.

"I for one believe implicitly in dreams," she said; "that is, not that they are reducible to rule, but that certain dreams occasionally meet with a singular realisation. Do not you?" she asked Edgar. The latter for a moment did not answer. He was thinking of something else. "Ah!" she said, "Signor Edgardo! Are you thinking of the next tale you will tell us? Do you know I have a strong presentiment that I shall find it very interesting indeed."

Edgar stammered an apology. "Indeed," he said, "I am very rude. I must plead a momentary absence of mind. I was thinking of a very remarkable dream."

"Well, you shall tell it to us as a forfeit," replied the Signora, gaily; but a strange and unaccountable shudder at the moment caused her heart to flutter, and she grew pale. "Give me half a wineglassful of Orvieto," she said; "I felt quite a sudden chill."

"And yet how hot it is," said Sir Robert. "There is absolutely not a breath of air."

"Come, come, Lessingham," said Howard, "have it over at once. Tell your story. You can't get off.

If you don't I promise you no mercy, and the ladies will roast you to death."

Mr. Lessingham at length complied. We shall omit his story as we did Edgar Leslie's. It was somewhat sentimental and very lengthy. During the narration we are bound to confess that both Violet and Edgar were guilty of a little rudeness happily unnoticed by the narrator, as they continued ever and anon to exchange a few words *sotto voce*, as much as possible behind the young lady's fan.

"I wonder," Violet whispered, when the tale was ended, "that he should have made himself the hero of that singular, but, I must say, altogether very silly story."

"Dear matter-of-fact girl!" said Edgar. "Considering that I am booked to tell another silly tale, I wish you would not be so critical."

"Dear romantic youth!" said Violet. "Considering that you may tell anything you like, if you don't tell us of your love for some wicked creature who jilted you, or your love for any one at all, for that matter."

Our readers will perceive from the above the terms on which these young persons were.

The Signora cast a fond and approving eye on this fair couple. She had divined the sterling worth and great talent of Edgar, and she loved "dear little Violet," as she still called her, as if she had been her own daughter. In beauty, Violet afforded a brilliant contrast to the Signora's style—in fact, she was an excellent "foil," as ill-natured persons remarked. No one, indeed, save a lover, could compare the fair, fresh,

English loveliness of Violet with the transcendent and statuesque beauty of La Stellini. It was a blue-eyed Hebe flitting round a Juno encircled with the cestus of Venus. But the Signora, conscious as she was of her own wondrous attributes of face and form, had none of the petitesses of coquetry. She was as far above them as the ideal Genius of a nation. You might as well have imagined "Britannia," or "Columbia," or the tearful poetic incarnation of "Erin," or "Italia," indulging in the minauderies of a Parisian belle, as have connected the noble presence of La Stellini with the follies of flirtation, or the frivolities of vanity and wrong. In a word, she was a noble-hearted woman, and had loved—she was an artiste and a mother!

But, nevertheless, she was fond of trifling amusements, and some very grand and rigid folks would have called her weak and silly sometimes. On the present occasion she had got a fancy for story-telling. Not unfrequently she would have a freak of cigarette-smoking in a little divan she fitted up in her own place. This was highly improper and immoral in the eyes of some ladies. Only fortunately, the men all understood her ways, much better than did the plainer and less gifted portion of her own sex.

"We must positively have a real love-tale now," she said. "A truce to the supernatural for a time. You, Mr. Leslie, you know, are to tell a story for me, to close this first day of our Decameron."

"And for me too," said Violet.

"No!" replied Edgar, "the major shall be your proxy, your major-domo of the Grand Hotel of

Fiction, which we have reared here by the river-side."

"Ah, now," said the major, "sure, if you want a love-story, you've got the wrong pig by the ear."

This avowal was received in the manner that it merited.

"The major shall tell his own love-story," said the queen of the day.

"It's a moral impossibility," protested the major.

"I trust it will be moral, at any rate," observed Howard.

"There is no appeal," said the Signora. "Continue, Signor Maggiore, if you please, and Mr. Leslie shall commence when you have done."

The major made a droll grimace of acquiescence. "What will I tell them?" he asked Edgar.

"How should I know," said that gentleman. "Surely you know some Irish tale or other. It needn't be original you know," he whispered.

"Oh! if it needn't be original——" said O'Reilly aloud.

"Yes, yes, it must, it must."

"Here goes then," said the major, and began as follows: "I once knew three sisters, milliners, in Holles-street, Cavendish-square, and mighty purty girls they were—— Arrah! What are ye doing?" (to Edgar). "Is it pulling the skirt off me coat, ye are?"

"That story won't do," said Edgar, who it appears knew what was coming, and who was divided between laughter and annoyance on Violet's account.

"Sure, there's no harm in it at all," said the major.

"No! no! of course not; but I know it won't amuse the ladies," said Edgar.

"As you plase, Mr. Leslie. I'm thinking you're mighty particular. But sure I've just thought of a real sentimental romance of my younger days. It wasn't a milliner at all" (to Edgar), "but a real lady, an admiral's daughter."

So the major told his second tale, which restored the animation of the party, which had somewhat flagged during the previous narration.

"It is your turn, now," said the Signora, addressing a young artist, who had been chiefly employed in making one or two very happy sketches of the three or four groups seated around, which were duly looked at and commended. "Come, try if you can tell us something as laughable and amusing as the major's. Commence your story, Signor Deveral, we are all attention." Thus commanded, the young artist began as follows:

"My friend Augustus Saunter was a very promising artist indeed. So every one said, who knew him; from his Aunt Snell, to whom he had so often pledged his word to reform his mode of living, down to his colourman and washerwoman, in short the whole circle of his acquaintance. Like the generality of promising artists, Gus Saunter found his way to Rome, in order to 'study art in its glorious cradle and home.' At least, that is the account which he gave of it; and so impressed was his Aunt Snell with the reality of his intention and the general propriety

of the plan, that she actually allowed him his travelling expenses and a hundred and fifty pounds a year during his sojourn. Once arrived and domiciled there, Gus Saunter fell into the habits of the place so completely, that he became quite a Roman, and did as the Romans (that is, the artistic Germans and Britons there) do. He wore a romantic costume, consisting of a sort of black sombrero, and a loose black velvet tunic, together with a wonderfully fine beard. He drew and painted Grazia, the celebrated female model, as often as most of his fellow students, and the dirty old mountain bag-piper, who sat at the foot of the Piazza di Spagna, raised a little fortune in sums of two pauls from his hands. When he entered the celebrated Caffé of the Fine Arts, the dwarf waiter Pietro would shout, in the deep bass of his stentorian voice, 'Ecco il Signor Augusto Inglese! Un mezzo-caldo subito, subito, poco aqua, molto zucchero, moltissimo rh'-um-m'-m-e!' In the morning, when not idling or love-making, he would paint from the Grazias and Terribiles, and other celebrated models of modern Rome in that day. Every night Gus played at billiards with his fellow-students, for baiocchi, like a noble Roman as he was. He constantly smoked a short pipe; indeed, he smoked eating, drinking, painting, and sometimes sleeping, for he went to bed with the everlasting pipe in his mouth. As his friend Bob Hobson said, if he had only had wings, he would have smoked flying. If this magnificent idleness did not lead to artistic greatness, what in the name of all the rubbish ever talked about the old masters and the trunks of mu-

tilated statues by twaddling dilettanti, ever could or should? Besides, Gus, as we have hinted, did occasionally work, and work hard. You should have seen one picture, which he sent to his aunt, as a Christmas gift. It was painted all over a canvas twelve feet by eight. Poor Aunt Snell, she had no room in her house in Kentish Town large enough in which to hang it, even without a frame. Besides, when it was unpacked in her small front garden, she nearly fainted at the sight. Gus had quite forgotten that his aunt had not overcome the narrow prejudices of the British bourgeoise of the old school, and had never been abroad in her life, nor even visited the National Gallery, or any of the collections of our nobility. So he sent her his first 'great' work, which represented a Bacchic group surrounding a sleeping Nymph. Gus went for 'colour, sir, colour,' as he said; and the contest between the Red Indian hue of the principal male figure, who was in the full dress—or its equivalent—of an African king, and the flesh tint of the nymphs and cupids, however artistic, did not satisfy the maiden notions of propriety of his worthy aunt. 'Take it away!' she cried, at first. 'Take it to Moses and Son! Take it anywhere, only take it away!' She at length allowed it to be placed in her passage—after locking her two maid-servants in the kitchen—with its face to the wall, and finally contracted for its admission into the Pantheon with a reserved price. In truth, she was as much shocked as if she had suddenly come upon a group of Kentish (not Kentish Town) hop-pickers, disporting themselves 'in cuerpo.' It

was some time before she listened to reason, and was reconciled to her nephew in the belief that he at least did not intend an outrage in place of an attention and a compliment. Amongst other things Gus Saunter was of a romantic temperament, and he fell violently in love with a lovely girl of high descent, but mean parentage, at Rome. When I say high descent, I do not mean to trace her to the Cæsars, but that she lived on a fifth floor in a narrow but lofty street. Nanina Giunicelli, possibly a real descendant of the celebrated poet of that name, was in reality a loving and artless girl. Her manners were primitive; but she had the 'gentle heart' sung in the exquisite canzone of her namesake:*

> "Within the gentle heart Love shelters him,
> As birds within the green shade of the grove;
> Before the gentle heart, in Nature's scheme
> Love was not, nor the gentle heart ere Love.

"Well, somehow love stole into the gentle heart of Nanina, and its object was the blonde, handsome, and really kindly and generous, though scatter-brained English student. What would his aunt have said, had she lived to know the catastrophe? The

* Guido Giunicelli. See the admirable translation, by D. G. Rossetti, of the canzone "Of the Gentle Heart."

> The sun strikes full upon the mud all day;
> It remains vile, nor the sun's worth is less,
> "By race, I am gentle," the proud man doth say;
> He is the mud, the sun is gentleness.
> Let no man predicate
> That ought the name of gentleness should have
> Even in a king's estate,
> Except the heart there be a gentle man's.
> The star-beam lights the wave,—
> Heaven hold the star, and the star's radiance.
>
> *The Early Italian Poets*, p. 25.

thoughtless Augustus, after becoming a Roman Catholic, went through the ceremony of marriage, with a tailor's daughter at Rome. When we say a tailor, we mean a veritable 'snip,' not a gorgeous phaeton-driving, 'hands' employing, whisker-cultivating, dashing Sartor of Bond-street, who is in reality no more a tailor than my Lord Tipton and Wednesbury is a coal, coke, and potato merchant, though he sells those things wholesale. And a happy life, whilst it lasted, these young people led. Gus fancied himself a sort of Titian when he painted from the beautiful creature who 'halved his joys, doubled his sorrows, and trebled his expenses.' No, the truth is she did not treble his expenses. One pays dear for models, and Gus gave up drinking and billiards, and began to paint in earnest. I said, 'whilst it lasted.' For all I know, it lasts now, and will last to the sweet end. When I last saw Nanina, about two years ago, she was almost as beautiful as ever, but matronly instead of being slender, and Gus was the papa of three lovely little girls. His dear old auntie had left him a small independence, and I have never known a happier man. There are various views of happiness in this world. I have sometimes thought I should have liked to have married a South Sea Island princess of some coral Capua of pristine innocence myself. I knew a man who passed three years in a sort of dream of perfect felicity, paddling in a light canoe over the lakes and water-courses of British North America, towards the Far West, attended by 'one sweet spirit for his minister,' in the form of a Red Indian girl. His chief regret was

the abandonment of that prolonged bridal tour in the wilderness. He shot and fished, and she cooked for him, and stitched and embroidered his hunter's garb.

"Well, there was one cloud over the early domestic bliss of my friend Augustus—one skeleton in his artistic cupboard, or closet. Nanina, before their young family was born, was subject to frantic fits of jealousy, notwithstanding her gentle heart. She could not bear her painter husband to visit any of his fair country-women in Rome. Possibly she feared that some day he would basely desert her and return to England, which to her was always a sort of dim and mist-shrouded Ultima Thule, and the very mention of which she dreaded. It so happened that an English family came to Rome, and took up a great deal more of her husband's time than she approved of, seeing that there was a fair young English cousin in the case, whom he escorted to see the 'lions.' As my friend did not care to publish his marriage during his aunt's life, poor Nanina was not one of the party on these occasions. Like a true Italian, when once her jealousy was aroused, it amounted to a species of black delirium and ungovernable frenzy. Her nature was entirely changed. All her time was spent in watching her husband. Everything which she saw unfortunately seemed to confirm her suspicions. One day, a week or so before the English family was about to leave Rome, she followed the unsuspecting Gus to a sort of out-door Hippodrome, popular among the trifling, and in some respects childish Romans. There she saw him conversing with the utmost warmth with his fair-haired cousin. He was

alone with her. On their road back, they paused in their animated dialogue, and he kissed her hand! That day Nanina saw nothing any more, save shapes of fire and blood. She had no longer any doubt. He was deceiving her, and she resolved on his death. The fact is, that poor Gus had just made a confidante of his little cousin, and actually acknowledged the kindly interest which she expressed in his marriage in the manner which I have related. She had promised to visit Nanina, and to stand his friend with his Aunt Snell, if cause should arise. She was not a daughter of the old lady, who, indeed, was a maiden lady of advanced age. That evening Gus went to the Opera, still with his cousin. You are not to suppose that he did not make any excuses about this constant attendance on her. When he returned, Nanina received him with caresses, though he might have noticed that she avoided kissing his lips. He did not notice anything—not even her wild manner and dissonant laugh. He was thinking of the pleasure he had in store for her the next day—the introduction to his cousin Rosy, and how all her little jealousies would be dispersed in air. So innocent was he, that he had rather fostered and amused himself with these 'little jealousies' than not.

"'So you've got supper for me, carina!' he said. 'What a darling little treasure of a wife!' The supper was excellent. He complained, however, a little of the flavour of the soup, to which she answered that there was too much salt, and gave him another spoonful of powdered Parmesan over it. As, however, the meal proceeded, he noticed that she ate

nothing, and at length observed the wildness of her demeanour, and the livid hue of her face. Her clear olive complexion was nearly black. Suddenly she rose, and the storm burst forth.

"'Listen!' she screamed. 'Traitor! thou hast deceived me, and I am avenged. I have—poisoned—thee, scelerato!—with these hands!' And she then burst out raving about him kissing his cousin's hand. 'But, wretch! villain! traditore! as thou art,' she exclaimed, 'I shall not survive thee to undergo the punishment of a murderess. Look!' and she snatched up a knife from the table, and would certainly have plunged it into her bosom, had not Gus wrenched it from her hand. Then she fainted, and he laid her on the floor.

"'Poisoned! yes, there can be no doubt. There is no trick; no child's play of deception here.' Poor Gus staggered to the wall. 'To die thus!' he murmured, 'and through a cursed mistake. Unhappy, miserable, but beloved girl—what! what have you done?' 'I was always a man of quick decision,' said Gus, in telling me the story. 'I determined to try and save my life. An emetic was the thing. There was no apothecary at hand. There was a salad on the table in a huge bowl. In a moment I emptied into it the remaining contents of three or four foul pipes. I broke up and mixed in it a half-smoked cigar, one of Prince Polonia's best, at five baiocchi. I added the oil of a cresset-lamp, the remainder of a dish of tomatoes, salt, vinegar, half a bottle of Orvieto, some English gin, French mustard, &c. &c., and, without hesitation, and with surprising firmness of

will, hastily swallowed, but *à plusieurs reprises*, the disgusting mess. What followed I need hardly repeat. Enough that I was poisoned, and it was a matter of life and death. I staggered ere long to a sofa. The room swam round, cold dews of agony burst forth, my heart fluttered and stopped, and I fainted in turn. When I came to myself, Nanina was kneeling by me, her face buried on my chest, and her long black tresses tangled by the night wind—for I had opened the window with a vague idea of calling for asssistance at first—and sweeping down to the floor. She had fairly wept herself down to a few occasional broken sobs, like a child. I asked her why she had done such a thing to me whom she loved. I pass over her explanations and bitter repentance. At length, in a faint voice, I inquired what poison she had administered. It was a natural question you will admit.'

"'The poison, the deadly English poison, which you gave me,' she said.

"'*I* gave you? I never gave you anything of the kind!'

"'Don't you remember,' she said, 'when you were once looking over the contents of your desk, before our marriage—destroying your English love-letters—I saw a small packet, and asked you what it was?' "Poison," you replied, "poison of the deadliest kind, made by a terrible English witch." "Why keep it?" I asked. "To end my days," you answered, "when the illusions of life have fled—if I fail to become a great painter, if my aunt sends me no more money, and, above all, if I

fail to win your love." 'I concealed the fatal packet, and kept it, and you never asked for it, because you have needed it not. And now I have destroyed you with it. Forgive me with your dying breath; for I swear to survive you not. See, I will take the rest.' And she took a small blue packet from her bosom. It was labelled 'EPSOM SALTS!'

"'I always had a tendency to romance,' observed Gus, 'and had certainly spun her that yarn, every word of which she implicitly believed. I had to send a note to my cousin the next morning to come and see us without my escort; for I did not recover from the effects of the antidote for several days, if not weeks. It entirely cured my little Nanina of jealousy. That was one good thing.'"

"Now," said the Signora once more, "let us have your story, the last, Signor Edgardo; the one, you know, you are to tell for me by proxy. We must think of returning to the city ere long, or we shall not arrive at the Palazzetto ere sun-down."

"I feel unusually dull," observed Edgar—"that is, if it is anything unusual with me—and by no means in story-telling trim; but I will relate to you, if you please, as well as I can, some singular circumstances told me by an acquaintance whom I met casually about a year ago in London, concerning a pleasure vessel — a yacht, as we English call it— Signora, which belonged to the narrator; and as it is a tale of romantic sympathies and attractions, and that kind of thing, I expect to be unmercifully quizzed. The person who told it to me was a reduced gentleman, very badly off indeed. I met him when he

was trying to pick up a few shillings occasionally on the Press, at a sort of journalistic haunt into which I had strayed to find an extra reporter or two for our paper for a special purpose. He was evidently a man who had seen better days; but dreadfully thin, seedy, and poor. I met him several times, and then lost sight of him, as I shall relate to you; but on one occasion, over a few glasses of grog, he got very communicative, and told me the disjointed story which I shall endeavour to narrate."

"I remember meeting just such a character, "observed Lessingham, "at a similar place. He was miserably poor, but a perfect gentleman in his manners and conversation."

"According to his own account, and I saw no reason to doubt it," proceeded Edgar, "this almost squalid littérateur had once been a man of fortune. He told me nothing about his domestic affairs — nothing that could give me a clue to his previous history—but it appeared that he had been very well off some time or other, and amongst other things been the owner of a brigantine yacht."

At the word "brigantine," an acute observer might have noticed an unusual interest and excitement in the Signora. She began to pull some flowers to pieces rapidly but mechanically, and said:

"Did you not know his name?"

"I cannot say for certain that I did," replied Edgar. "I found out afterwards that he went by the name of Williams in the Bohemian circle in which he moved; but I felt assured that was not his

real appellation. The way in which the conversation to which I refer came about was simply this. A talk had arisen in the coffee-room of the house where I met him about ships being lucky or unlucky, and sailing on a Friday, and that sort of thing. Some one quoted the line from Milton,

Built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark;

and some one else declared it was all nonsense. I believe all this was apropos of the *Great Eastern*, when this person, who had been sitting bent over a table with his head upon his arms, suddenly looked up, and said that it was all quite true; that a vessel might be fated from the stocks; he was certain of it —in fact, he had witnessed it. A friend of his had been the owner of a splendid yacht (here there was a slight Bohemian laugh at the notion of any friend of his being in a position to have a vessel of the kind). He gave them, however, a brief outline of the facts, and a very remarkable dream that accompanied the loss of the vessel; and at my particular request he afterwards filled up some parts of the story, which I will now endeavour to narrate to you again."

Had any one noticed the Signora during the last part of Edgar's explanation how he heard the story, he would have been struck by her agitation. When the dream was alluded to, she turned deadly pale, and placed one hand on the ground as if to support herself from falling forward from the cushion on which she sat. Apparently recovering herself by a strong

effort, she merely let her veil fall as if to shut out the glare of the sun, and turned her head slightly away from the party.

"In the first place," continued Edgar, "the vessel in question was constructed on the lines of a celebrated pirate and slaver, ordered to be broken up by the government, and taken surreptitiously by some one who had access to the dockyard. She was built by Messrs. G., the well-known firm at Blackwall, for a gentleman who died on the very day she was launched. He was a wealthy solicitor just retired from practice."

"Holy Moses!" cried the major, "what a beginning! Built for a solicitor on the lines of a pirate! and him—the lawyer, I mane—gone to blazes the day she was launched! Did they make her rudder out of a gibbet—tell me, now—and carve her figure-head in the likeness of ould Scratch?"

"Well," resumed Edgar, "it appeared that the lawyer died without a will, and Messrs. G. offered the vessel for sale on behalf of the heirs. She was a beautiful craft of some two hundred and fifty tons, with deck port-holes for fourteen guns, but actually carrying only six long brass six-pounders. My acquaintance—for I afterwards found out the astonishing fact that my coffee-house acquaintance had been himself the owner—was dining at Blackwall one day, when he was induced to look at her, and it led to his purchasing her a few days after. This broken-down gentleman had once been the possessor of a considerable fortune—enough to enable him to purchase a vessel of such dimensions, and to entertain princes

and ambassadors on board. I must tell you that he was then informed that the vessel was built for a gentleman who had died; but did not know that the event took place on the very day, if not hour, of her launch. He also had heard from a kind of show Long Tom Coffin style of sailor put on board as ship-keeper, that there had been a lady concerned—in fact, that the man of law had been led to this and other extravagances by a fair Dalilah who had a sea-going fancy (possibly, she was in love with the third mate of a merchantman), and that all her hopes and machinations had been disappointed by the sudden demise of her legal protector without a will—or, at least, the discovery of one—for, as the next heir was also a lawyer, there is no saying what complex villainy had been at work."

"You seem to have a pretty idea of the profession, sir," observed Sir Robert Warkworth.

"I have seen something of it," replied Edgar, sadly. "The vessel," he continued, "showed evident tokens that she was intended for a fair occupant. There was a piano, and even a work-table, and certain gorgeous blue satin coverings and decorations utterly unfit for sea. She was named after an estate lately purchased by her defunct proprietor, the *Ravenshaw*. My informant had been, it appeared, to see her on the day that the purchase was completed, in company with the friend who first found her out in the docks. On their way back they got into a steam-boat at London-bridge to return to the West-end. There were scarcely any passengers on board, for the day was dull and cold. There was, however, a fashionably-

dressed female sitting on deck forward, apparently immersed in the pages of a novel. The friend accompanying the new yacht owner was a gay and facetious man. He stole behind the lady, and peeped over her shoulder to see what she was reading.

"'Guy Ravenshaw,' he exclaimed. 'Hallo, I say,' (addressing Williams), 'why, that's the name of your yacht.'

"'What's that you say, sir?' said the woman, almost fiercely, shutting the book and rising. 'There's only one vessel of that name, I'm sure, and that is one too many.'

"'I tell you, my dear lady,' said Philip Askew, for such, if I remember, was his name, 'that the *Ravenshaw* is the name of my friend's new yacht. Allow me to introduce him:—Lord Sealegs, Miss Clementina Flouncer, of the Iron Citizen Company's steam yacht *Bridegroom*.' What further nonsense he might have uttered was cut short by the person whom he addressed.

"'It's a lie,' she said, stamping her foot, 'and you are a couple of impertinent snobs.'

"'Really,' said Williams, gently, 'I don't know what I've done to deserve such an insult. I am sorry my friend has annoyed you with his nonsense; but what he said was quite true so far as the vessel is concerned, for I bought a craft called the *Ravenshaw* this morning, and it certainly is very odd you should be reading a book of that title, which I hope will plead an excuse for his intruding on your privacy.'

"And he bowed and turned away. As for Askew, to use his own expressive language, he was completely

'shut up' by the lady's violence. He affected a comic fear.

"'Did you ever see such a Jezebel?' he said; 'she's a perfect lucifer-match in petticoats. I don't feel safe on the same side of the funnel.'

"It was the lady's turn now to take the initiative. Following Williams aft, she asked him to excuse her incivility.

"'You don't know,' she said, 'what cause I have to be thus excited. Is it really true that you have bought the *Ravenshaw?* It is not likely that there are two vessels of that name. She lies, or did lie, in the East India Dock at Blackwall."

"'Exactly, she is there now,' he replied; 'we have just left her.'

"'A large vessel,' she said—'I mean, large for a yacht—with a piano and guns on board, and a ladies' cabin with blue satin furniture?'

"Williams signified his assent, and in the vanity of new ownership of such a magnificent acquisition, took some papers out of his pocket and showed them to her in corroboration.

"'That vessel was built for me; the piano is mine,' she said. 'Do you know to whom she belonged? It was Mr. ——, the solicitor, in Lincoln's-inn-fields. We were engaged to be married. His scoundrel cousin destroyed the will.'

"Here she uttered some very unfeminine maledictions on that gentleman's spiritual and corporeal appurts.

"'And now,' she said, 'I am ruined, left a beggar, penniless. I have not even my own house of fur-

niture, which belonged to me before I knew him. And you are the owner of that vessel. I tell you, you have no right to it. It is mine; and I have been robbed; basely plundered, I say. But I warn you that you will have no luck with it, for all your money and your bounce. I tell you that vessel is doomed and accursed. Do you know that my Charlie—my husband that was to be only a week after—one week, I say—died in my arms the very hour she was launched? Listen,' she said, 'you are a civil-spoken fellow enough. As for that fellow there,' pointing to Askew, 'if it was his—but he's only some sponging vagabond, I suppose, who has got the length of your foot—I would not say a word to save him from grief. But you are not a bad sort. Take my advice, and get rid of that vessel as soon as you can, and don't ever sail in her, if you value your life. She is unlucky and accursed. God knows, I have cursed her enough, for it was the bother about her and a cold caught in the docks when fitting her out, that killed him, and she'll come to a bad end. That's all I have to say.'

"And with these words, the steamer having just stopped at the Temple Pier, the lady saluted Williams and walked off, to the great relief of Mr. Philip Askew, gentleman at large, late of the Queen's Bench, who expected nothing less than to have his manly beauty impaired by a sudden feline impulse on that amiable creature's part. As for Williams, he thought that the rencontre and the title of the novel involved a strange coincidence, but soon dismissed it from his mind.

"It is not my intention to tell you the whole extraordinary history which he imparted to me of his adventures in that vessel, whose purchase and possession were inaugurated in so ominous a way. How, of his three sailing masters, the first robbed him; the second deceived him, though bound by every tie of gratitude, by determining, at whatever cost, never to quit England, where he had formed a disgraceful attachment; and the third turned out a drunken, unqualified scamp, who lost all command over the crew by smuggling; and, finally, through his profligate neglect of duty suffered the vessel to be run on shore. The hairbreadth escapes of Williams from fire, shipwreck, assassination, and even marooning on a rocky island, would fill a volume, but somehow he did always manage just to escape. On three separate occasions his life was saved by distinct and most remarkable presentiments of evil. I will mention two of these, which occur to me. At Plymouth he had gone on shore one evening with some friends. The vessel was moored in the Hamoaze close to the guard-ship. The lazy sailing-master had neglected to deposit the powder, of which there was a large quantity, together with fireworks, on board, as he was bound to do, at Drake's Island, a regulation of which Williams was entirely ignorant. About nine o'clock that night he felt a great desire to go on board. It was blowing half a gale of wind, and his companions endeavoured in vain to dissuade him. No one offering to accompany him, he went off alone, and after a hard pull got put on board, and entering the main cabin, or saloon, flung himself down on the cushions

and fell fast asleep. He was awakened by a crash of glass. He thought that the watch on deck had broken the glass of the skylight, and hailed him, but got no answer, and fell asleep again. He was awakened by a second crash. This time he was fairly aroused, and opening the door aft perceived a dense cloud of smoke. The sleeping berths were aft of the main saloon, and beyond that was a sumptuous ladies' cabin, with mirrors and a small brass stove. Beyond that was the sail cabin. The crew all slept forward. On opening a second door he was met by a burst of flame. The vessel was on fire. He quickly roused the hands, and the fire was with difficulty put out. That morning he had overhauled the stock of powder and fireworks, and not having finished his examination, it was crammed in a hurry into an empty sleeping berth next to the ladies' cabin, where the steward had put some linen to air round the little brass stove. The motion of the vessel had upset this. When the damage was surveyed next day, it was found that the bulk-head between the fire and the powder was charred within half an inch. Had Williams remained on shore, had he not awakened when he did—nay, had he not acted with promptitude and self-possession, not only would the vessel have been blown out of the water, but the flag-ship, and perhaps many others, would have been in all probability burnt and destroyed. Nor could he in the least explain by what mysterious impulse he was induced to go on board that night.

"On another occasion, the vessel was anchored off the Hyères, waiting to go into Brest the next day.

It was blowing scarcely a capful of wind, and all was made snug. But Williams alone could not rest in his berth. He had a strange idea when he woke that there was a kind of grating or scraping under the ship's bottom. He went on deck and talked to the watch. The man laughed at the notion of anything being wrong. Williams turned in again and again, but could not rest. He was in a state of nervous excitement. As he said, all the events of his life crowded upon his brain. At last, he awoke the sailing-master, who was not over-pleased at being disturbed. He, too, laughed at the idea of anything being wrong.

"'There's no wind of any account,' he said, 'and the ground tackle of this vessel would hold a ship of nine hundred tons. It's as good an anchorage as any in the world.'

"Again Williams went on deck, again he turned in, and couldn't rest. So he went a second time to the captain's berth, and told him to tumble up and come on deck.

"'I'm certain there's something wrong,' he said.

"I don't suppose he would have been flattered, if he had heard the remarks made by that surly mariner on the occasion of his night's rest being disturbed. He, however, obeyed his owner's and registered captain's orders, and stumbled and grumbled leisurely on deck, where William stood gazing over the dark expanse of sea. The master looked professionally aloft, asked the watch some nautical commonplace question, and approached Williams whilst fumbling for his pipe.

"'I don't think there's much harm, sir,' he said.

"'Look!' said the other; 'what is that long white line yonder astern, that gleams like phosphoric light?'

"'Lord have mercy!' exclaimed the captain, dashing his pipe down and rushing to the after-hatch. 'All hands on deck! Tumble up! The ship will be ashore in ten minutes.' And he seized his speaking-trumpet. 'Now, then, up with the anchor, all able-bodied hands! Look alive! There's not a moment to lose. We're dragging the anchor,' he said to Williams in passing him. 'Look alive, all of you!' But the anchor resisted their utmost efforts. 'Bring a cold-chisel, carpenter. Here! you Davis, fetch an empty keg.' In five minutes the keg was attached by a long line to a link of the cable, which was cut, leaving the vessel free. All hands were then sent aloft. 'Shake out every rag of her!' cried the captain, 'She'll bear it. Now then, round with her.' After a couple of tacks he laughed and looked silly. 'We're right enough now, sir,' he said, touching his hat respectfully; 'but, by the Lord Harry, if it hadn't been for your wakefulness, the ship would have been lost.'

"The next day the French authorities sent out a lumper to pick up the abandoned anchor. They found it no easy job. One of the flukes had caught in the fluke of an immense old barnacle-covered and generally marine-incrusted anchor of an unknown and ancient pattern, which is to be seen at this day in the dockyard at Brest. For the authorities politely offered

to make no charge for the recovery of the yacht's anchor, if the owner would agree to their retention of the one it had been the means of fishing up—a request which he had certainly neither the power nor the inclination to decline."

"Decidedly it would appear that this inspired Williams was not doomed to be drowned," observed Lessingham.

"I hope he has not met with a worse fate," was Edgar's remark.

All this time the Signora kept silent, with heaving bosom and averted face.

"Mr. Williams told me," continued Edgar, "that after a cruise of some two years, he left the vessel at Marseilles, and returned to London viâ France, being summoned by important business. I forget what it was. Probably some highly respectable attorney had bolted with all his client's money, or some trifle of that kind. He told his captain to proceed at once to Southampton; but for long heard nothing of him or the vessel, and got seriously alarmed. At length he received a letter from Plymouth from the master, saying he had been forced to put into Vigo Bay through foul weather, and had again met with a gale and sprung the main boom, which caused him to put into Plymouth contrary to orders, which were to touch at Southampton. The vessel was at her old anchorage, he said, off Drake's Island (the place whence she started just two years before on her cruise). Williams was glad to get this news. As he was perusing the letter in bed, his servant came in.

"'A shabby, short little man," he said, 'wants to see you, sir, very particular; he says his name is Pottle, and that he was once on board your yacht.'

"'How very odd,' observed Williams. 'Show him in!'

"This Pottle was by profession a hairdresser and barber. He was an intemperate, amusing little cockney rascal, and Williams had taken a fancy to him, it appeared, and taken him with him as valet. He had sailed from the port of London, but suffered so dreadfully *en route* to Plymouth from sea-sickness, that a medical man there counselled Williams to send him home, as he considered his life in danger. Pottle had kept up his spirits all the cruise; but when he heard he had to quit the vessel, he was convulsed with grief, and had to be sent on shore almost forcibly. Williams good-naturedly gave him a small sum to set him up in business. He would always insist on shaving his master at sea, ill as he was, and used to poke his little pale, pasty, pea-green face up the companion hatch now and then and say, 'Have we passed any remarkable places, sir?' at which everybody laughed. Since then Williams had not seen him, and did not know either where he was, or that Pottle was acquainted with his address. On asking him why he came, he said he thought Mr. Williams might want to be waited on, and that he heard where he was from one of the servants whom he met.

"'Have you got any news yet of the yacht, sir?' he said.

"'Just got a letter this morning,' replied Williams. 'She is all right at the old place at Plymouth.'

"And he gave him the letter to read.

"'God be thanked!' said the little man, in a very earnest manner.

"But as he was always quaint, Williams paid no particular attention to his remark. As, however, he proceeded with his ministration, Williams observed that his hand shook very much, and that he was trembling and very nervous.

"'So you've been at your old tricks again,' he said; 'had a drop too much last night.'

"'No, sir,' he replied, 'that I have not. I've taken the pledge these three months.'

"'What is the matter with you?'

"'Nothing, sir, nothing,' was the answer; but in a tone that meant something very plainly.

"After considerable inquiry and pressing, he said it was about the yacht.

"'About the yacht?' said Williams. 'What do you mean?'

"'Don't let her sail from Plymouth, pray don't!' exclaimed the little man at last; 'for if you do, she'll surely be lost.'

"'You are drunk, sir, or mad,' cried Williams.

"'If ever I was on board that vessel, sir, I was last night,' replied Pottle.

"Williams was glad he had finished shaving him, for he began now to think that he had in reality parted with his senses. Pottle, however, proceeded to tell him that he had gone to bed a little before

twelve the preceding night, and dreamt he was on board the vessel and on deck. It was dusk, and he thought there were only three persons besides himself. Suddenly it became dark as pitch, and the vessel seemed to rush through sea and night as if they were in a railway tunnel, as he expressed it. Then there was a tremendous crash, and he fancied he was thrown forward and fell on his knees. In answer to the question whether that was all, he replied that some one brought up the twelve loaded muskets kept in a rack in the saloon and fired them. Then he saw blue lights, such as they used to burn on board, somewhere over their heads, and then he awoke.

"'Well, what then?' asked Williams.

"'I got up and opened the window and looked out,' he replied, 'and I heard Big Ben strike two, as the wind ceased to blow for a moment. I then went to bed again, and fell asleep. I dreamt the same dream again, only fainter like and more confused, and awoke a second time in a fright. I could not lie down again, and the room seemed to go round with me, and I felt sick. There,' he said, 'I have just the same feeling now.'

"'The fact is,' said Williams, 'pledge or no pledge, you got very tipsy last night.'

"'Upon my soul,' returned the little man, 'I hadn't touched a drop of anything stronger than tea, and, what's more, haven't these three months; unless it has been a drop of peppermint-water now and then.'

"In spite of his better reason, Williams could not help being somewhat struck by what he had heard.

"'Don't, sir, don't let the vessel go to Southampton,' reiterated Pottle; 'if you do, she will certainly be lost.'

"'Nonsense,' replied Williams.

"But the afternoon of that day, after telling the anecdote to several persons, he actually wrote to the captain at Plymouth instructing him not to sail, for that he would come down there instead.

"The next day, however, he received intelligence of the wreck of the yacht. The captain, who put into Plymouth for his own purposes, went on shore, after writing to his owner, the day that the vessel arrived. The crew, being demoralised, followed his example one by one till only three hands were left, who had been shipped at Vigo. They had no acquaintances there. The vessel had but one anchor out and thirty fathom of cable. It was a calm and beautiful afternoon. At two o'clock the next morning a terrific gale blew from the south, and the vessel dragged her anchor. The raw hands did not even contrive to remove the stopper of the cable. So she was blown in upon the rocks near the citadel, and one of those on board fired the muskets, which were answered by the coast-guard burning blue lights and boarding the vessel. This was what Williams ascertained on going down."

"Was she a total wreck?" asked Sir Robert.

"No: she was completely gutted from stem to stern, and you might have driven a cart and horse through her bottom. But Williams had her patched up and brought round to London, where the Messrs. G. refitted her; and Williams sold her finally to an

eminent Quaker firm to run as an opium clipper. She made several voyages, he said. To the end, however, she was unlucky, and to the end there was something strange and weird-like connected with her fate."

"What was it?" asked Lessingham.

"One evening Williams had a party at his rooms, and the conversation fell upon the vessel, and the dream, and her constant run of ill luck, and the narrow escapes he had when cruising with her, and the fact that she never could go anywhere or do anything right. If she started with the fairest wind for any port, she was sure to be driven in an opposite direction. Nothing connected with her prospered.

"'It's my firm belief,' said Williams, 'that I shall hear some day or other that she is lost, and all on board with her. I should not like to bet on such a subject, or else I would offer odds.'

"The very next morning a newspaper came into his hands, directed to him by chance; that is, it was a copy of a new daily paper that lived a few days, and was sent round to people whose names were in the 'Court Guide.' The first thing he saw on opening it was the obituary, and the first name in it, upon which his eye fell, was that of a young man, to which the following brief and melancholy tale was appended:

"'Supposed to have been on board of the —— (I forget the name, but she was re-christened when Williams bought her), which foundered in a typhoon off the Pellew Islands, when all hands were lost.'

"Williams had great difficulty in persuading one

of his friends, whom he met that evening somewhere, and to whom he showed the newspaper, that he had not already seen it or heard of it, when he so distinctly prophesied the fate of the vessel the night before."

"Very singular!" said Sir Robert—"very odd indeed! Do you not think so?" he said, appealing to the Signora. But that lady did not answer at the moment. She was apparently deeply lost in thought. "But who could that poor fellow Williams be?" pursued Sir Robert. "Let me see what brigantine yacht was there——"

"And what became of him?" said Lessingham. "That's what I'm anxious to know. Did you lose sight of him altogether?"

"It couldn't be Aubrey, surely," half mused Sir Robert, aloud; "the fellow, you know, who lost his wife in that strange way. He had a large vessel I've heard, and I think she was wrecked. He was an awful cad, I believe."

Edgar shook his head.

"I gave the poor fellow a little work to do," he said, "just a trifle—more copying than anything—and he brought it back regularly enough three or four times. But the last time he didn't come any more; and as I owed him rather more than usual, for it was rather a heavy job, I feared the worst. I remembered that at our last interview, he had complained of shivering and pains in the head. I found his lodging with very great difficulty, through one of the queerest creatures I ever saw, who spoke to him one night in the bar of a public-house where we met. My worst

fears were realised. The poor squalid landlady told me he had caught a fever and become delirious, and utterly beyond her control. Indeed, she was afraid he might hurt her children, of whom it appeared he was usually excessively fond. One wet night he rushed out into the streets and never returned. He told the landlady that he was going to look for his wife, though she had never seen nor heard of such a person before. As I heard of a dead body being found about that time that answered the description, I gave up the search, and—— But what on earth is the matter?"

All looked round, and Violet screamed aloud. The Signora had fallen back fainting on the grass.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A GENERAL CHURCH MEETING.

A herald father meets a trader sire,
And says, "You have a daughter, I a son.
An ancestor is worth a bale of goods;
My tarnished 'scutcheon wants fresh lacquering."
And so 'tis done—the hawk paired with the dove,
The peafowl with the buzzard.
*A Play of Genoa*, Act ii. Scene i.

Why, who would have thought of seeing you here.—*Street Colloquy.*

"CHIVERS!"
"Yes, my lord."
"Any letters this morning?"
"Yes, my lord."
"How many?"
"Just a dozen, my lord."
"Sort them."
"Certainly, my lord." (Period of ten minutes.)
"Chivers!"
"Yes, my lord."
"Sorted them?"
"Yes, my lord."
"Any duns?"

"Seven, my lord."

"Burn 'em."

"Yes, my lord."

"Any women?"

"Only three this morning, my lord."

"Read 'em, and tell us who they are. No, not now. They'll keep till after bweakfast. The weather is not very hot. What's the mercury in the shade?"

"Sixty-eight, my lord!"

"Bet a sovereign, 'tisn't seventy? Any other letters, Chivers?"

"One from the marquis, your lordship's father, my lord."

"Put it in the coat I shall wear to-day. The bweast-pocket. I'll read it at the Fogey Club, if I get there this afternoon. Anything else, Chivers? Stop, seven and five is eleven, ain't it? By-the-bye, got any money this morning?"

"Not a fiver in the house, my lord! We was cleaned out yesterday at the pigeon match, and your lordship finished up, if you recollect, at the 'Blue Posts' with the Duke of Ipswich and Mr. Crawler."

"So I did, Chivers, and precious good fun we had, I can tell you."

"I must go and get your lordship a new hat" (holds up a crushed hat with a doll stuck in the ribbon of it).

"All right, see if you can't get a tenner from old Tiler."

The domestic shook his head. "It's no go, my lord! You can have any amount of hats; but no money."

"Then order twelve dozen, and sell 'em at two bob each. But I say, Chivers, what's that other letter?"

"It's from Mr. Moss Lewis. He will see your lordship at twelve in the City."

"Dash it! why didn't you say so before? Give it me, quick." (Reads.) "A pony in cash. Fourteen dozen champagne. Confound his gooseberry! Seventeen pictures by celebrated Dutch masters. The unmerciful old sinner! Nine French clocks. Hurray! we'll start 'em for a sweepstakes, and see which will do the first quarter of an hour first. Here, toss over my clothes. Look sharp, Chivers. Give me some seltzer and brandy. And stop, Chivers!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Get me some cigars, a Hansom, and a stamp for three hundred. You don't mean to say you haven't enough 'pewter' for that! Then Lewis must stand the paper; and it's what he don't like, I can tell you." (Goes into next room, singing "Lord Tom Tidler is my name, doing oblongs is my game. Toodle-dum, toodle-dum, day!"

Chivers took out his money and counted it. "Three fivers and three sovs.," he said, "is eighteen, and nine and fourpence-hapenny, all saved from them precious gals and swindling friends of hisn. And they've offered him the governorship of New Zealand, to get him out of the country. I don't think the savages can teach him much. Why he nearly bit a policeman's thumb off last Sunday night. We had to find a little ready money then, and no mistake. But, bless you, he's not to be had, knows a game worth two of that. He could marry half a dozen hundred

thousand pounders to-morrow, if he'd a mind. We must look out for a two hundred and fifty thousand pounder, I reckon, to get him square. And she's to be got. It's pretty nigh time to do it. I'm getting tired of these games—it don't suit a man of forty, as is of a serious turn of mind; and it don't pay half so well as it did, that's another thing. He's a borrowing far too much money, to suit my book. 'Chivers,' says I, yesterday, 'what are you doing of, Chivers? you're going too fast to be safe.' No! we must keep him a bit sober, and tie him up to a sack of money in a female form. There's the markis, he says to me very serious lately, 'Chivers,' says he, 'if you'll get my son well married, I'll stand something handsome.' And if I don't work the oracle with his creditors, a buying up his paper, why I'm a precious babe in arms, and I don't look much like one neither."

So saying, Mr. Chivers looked at himself in his lordship's glass, and arranged his lordship's aristocratic brushes on his lordship's marble dressing-table for his lordship's honourable toilet. We shall now see how Mr. Chivers kept his word.

Having now transported our readers back again to London, we must reintroduce them to some old acquaintances. The same crossing in front of St. George's, Hanover-square, shall be the scene. There has been a marriage there this morning, of course. Lord Thomas Peckham Tidler, M.P., third son of the Marquis of Hardupvery, to Miss Bettina Cruet, only daughter of old Cruet, the senior partner of Cruet, Platum, and Selloff, the great advertising cutlery, electro-plate, and japanned goods dealers, whose great

philanthropical query of "why give any more?" is so well-known, wherever there is an eligible dead wall or opportunity for its publication. Lord Tidler's dishonoured cheques and bills were almost as plentiful as the advertisements of his father-in-law; but he employed agents to buy them in, as soon as the marriage was privately arranged. Lord Thomas Peckham Tidler had two or three agents besides the accomplished Chivers—one a broken down old disreputable captain of dubious antecedents — who were continually employed in changing his cheques; and his lordship could not well be arrested, because he sat in Parliament for one of his father's pocket-boroughs, a thing very snugly managed by the family solicitors, and he always bolted off salmon-fishing in Norway, or yachting in the Mediterranean, or somewhere on the Continent, or to America, just before the House broke up. As for his furniture, he had executed a bill of sale of that to his body servant, the aforesaid Mr. Chivers, who sometimes did a little business in money-lending himself, whilst his master borrowed. We do not mean to say that he lent much money to his master. The rogue knew better than that. He had no wages, save perquisites. He sold the wines and cigars which his master got on tick, and they divided the plunder. He would pay a cab occasionally for his lordship, and sometimes got him out of any petty monetary scrape, such as affected his "honour" in a peculiarly delicate manner. In return, he now and then might have made his master jealous, had the latter been of a suspicious or observant turn of mind. But he was such a pleasant,

reckless gentleman, was Lord Thomas Peckham Tidler. Sentiment, or any serious impertinence in the way of observation or reflection, no more penetrated his aristocratic outside than water a duck's back.

Lord Tom Tidler ate of the best, drank of the best, and smoked of the best. Any one who entered his rooms might quaff champagne, or sparkling moselle all day, if he liked it.

"It costs me nothing," Lord Thomas would say. "My fellow there" (meaning his valet) "is the sufferer. He paid for the stamp."

"I beg your pardon, my lord," replied the latter on one occasion, "I got it from the new stationer's in Bond-street, on your lordship's credit."

"Let's order a ton of gilt-edged note-paper," cries Tidler; "and I'll supply all my friends at seventy-five per cent. less than manufacturing prices."

His lordship has been known to leave a ten guinea watch, on the evening of the day that he obtained it, for nineteen shillings with a shabby stranger in a night-house. He was to have a pound advanced on it, and the stranger stopped a shilling, as he said, for interest on the loan for a day. Of course Tidler never saw watch or stranger again.

"What does it matter?" he said, "I shall never pay for it."

Yet tradesmen treated him with respect, whilst they would have remorsely sued any poor but honest man, who required time, through some unforeseen misfortune, to pay a bill for necessaries. And in spite of all this, Lord Thomas was a most popular man. Now and then he delivered a lecture on temperance or

early closing, or a missionary undertaking. He was a great card at public dinners, especially of the philanthropic kind. He would have shone in returning thanks for the House of Commons at a Tradesman's Economic Burial Dinner, or Protection Association; it didn't matter in the least to him. Ministers of State wrote to him, "My dear Tidler"—his party was then in. If a small man wanted a small place, he came to Tidler, or more frequently to his valet; and if he didn't get it, you may depend upon it the shabbiness of the douceur was the most probable reason. Just before his marriage, he had the offer of the governorship of an important but distant Colony; but he treated the offer with scorn. You should have heard him ridicule the idea of having seven thousand pounds a-year in a place where there were no music-halls and no Opera. At length, he condescended to make his creditors happy. Sixteen bridesmaids, in sixteen dresses duly described by the Court milliners who provided them, graced the marriage ceremony; the choral service was intoned, and dukes, earls, duchesses, and countesses innumerable, saw Lord Thomas Peckham Tidler "thrown off." After this amazing display, the old church looked grim as ever. There was the usual number of shabby old women in rusty black, crouching on the door-steps under the pillars, like the ghosts of ill-sorted marriages, or the battered Caryatides escaped from the architectural ornaments of a temple consecrated to repentant Hymen.

It was a fine afternoon, dusty and somewhat cold. A north-east wind was blowing, though the sun was

occasionally hot, in a manner very favourable to bronchitis, especially as the previous day had been remarkably close and "muggy"—we know no other term to express it.

Any one who had happened to stand at the corner of the street opposite at the precise moment of which we are speaking, and who had been there some four years before, on the day when the Downy Cove played so conspicuous a part there as street-sweeper, could not but have expressed some surprise at seeing that individual, apparently unchanged by time or circumstances, busy in his old vocation again. Yes, there he was, as energetic as ever, sweeping away, and ever and anon indulging in a little war-dance of his own, and striking the arm which happened to be unencumbered by the besom on his chest, like an Indian fakir. Doubtless, he did not wear the same garments; but they seemed identical. Nor did he, in all probability, wield the same besom; but besoms are very much alike, especially when they are new. The man himself had scarcely changed at all. In fact, no one could have detected the slightest change in him. Let us pause and hear what he says.

"Dror it mild, Cove, dror it mild. I shall 'ave some of the nobs swearin' at me orful for kickin' up a dust. I vish they'd come down vith it a little 'andsomer, that's all. Now, here's a gent a-comin'. Vell, I'll show him wot I could do if it wos sloppy; and, pr'aps, hif he's of an himaginative turn, he'll fork out notwithstandin'."

As he spoke—unconsciously repeating almost the very words he had once used before on a similar

occasion, in the very same locality—the person approached. It was Grinderby, walking slowly. Apparently he was a little lame. He stopped, and looked round. "Not here?" said that worthy—"not here? and I'm a quarter of an hour late. That looks bad, very bad; looks as if his game was quite sure. No eagerness for the money, hard up as he is." And the lawyer took off his hat, and polished his forehead with a large silk handkerchief, which he pulled out, looked anxiously round, and then slowly hobbled towards Hanover-square.

"I'm glad I twigged him in time," said the Downy. "It's that old limb of an hattorney—him as ruined them Aubreys, poor things, and as I vent that queer message for down by the river t'other day. Wot's he hup to now?"

At this moment, a man, who had been sitting on the church steps, with his head buried in his hands, and his elbows on his knees, as if sleeping, or in grief, suddenly rose up and came past the Downy.

"I've seen you afore, too, someveres," quoth that individual. "I heggspeck we've been a stayin' at the same hotel, or wos it at the Hunderground Club, in Mint-street? Let's see! You ain't the young man as comes the shivery-shaky dodge outside the cookshops, air yer?" A shake of the head followed this inquiry to himself. "Nor you don't do Moses and the bulrushes on Vaterloo Bridge. No! nor you ain't in the groundsel line. Nor the owls ain't yours. Nor you don't come the snakes in his bussum caper. I've seen yer face afore, and yet it licks me to say vere."

At this moment the man passed again. He wore a thick and matted beard, and his hair was long and hung in elf-locks over his neck. He might have been handsome, but want or dissipation had set its seal upon his face.

Sharp misery had worn him to the bone.

He did not appear to see any one as he came by.

"I say, guv'nor," quoth the Downy. "Hem! Eh?" And he executed a series of little signs and winks, to which the other responded by a vacant stare, which expressed neither curiosity nor astonishment.

The Downy shook his head. "It's a case of genu-ine distress," he said. "I wonder the perlice haven't nobbled him yet. He don't seem 'arf wide avake. Hi! mate! I say, wot's the time o' day? Starvin', hold feller, is that the game?"

The other turned upon him a look so wolfish and yet despairing, that it staggered the equanimity of even our experienced friend.

"Here's 'arf a pint," he said, tendering him a copper, "as I meant to 'ave laid sum of this 'ere dust vith, as I've bin a swallerin' of. Vell, pr'aps Prowidence vill score it up someveres in them ewerlastin' gardens vere there's nothink to pay, and no lieyers nor perlicemen at no price votsumever. No offence, mate," he added, after a pause.

The individual whom he addressed laughed aloud.

"My good fellow," he said, "I'm much obliged to you, but I'm not begging. Dash it! thank you, all the same."

And he laughed with a hollow and hysterical laugh, and walked rapidly away.

For once, a serious expression appeared on the visage of our volatile friend. He did not even throw down his besom; but placed it against the railing, and his finger against his nose in an attitude of deep reflection.

"It's him," he said at last, "it's him, I'll pound it. If it ain't him, it's his woice, as has bin in the country and prigged the clothes hoff a scar-crow. Of course, poor cretur', his 'air and beard 'ave grown wonderful long. Venever a swell's hout of luck, that's sure to happen. Here's old Grinderby a-comin' back. The werry lieyer as did the bis'ness. Wotever is he a schemin' of? I wish I'd follered that poor unfortynate cretur'. Well, he *'ave* come down in the world, and no mistake; and wot's more, I don't think he can come down no lower vithout hookin' of it haltogether. Poverty's bad enough for them, as has never knowed nothink better. But a real gent in hout-and-hout trouble is wus hoff than a tame monkey got out of a travellin' show in a snow-storm."

"Here, fellow!" called Grinderby, who had reapproached our friend, "do you want to earn sixpence?"

"Yes, if I can do it honestly," was the answer.

"Hum!" growled Grinderby; "I shouldn't think you need trouble yourself about *that*."

"Pr'aps if I hadn't, guv'nor, I might be better hoff. I vunce had a chance of henterin' a hattorney's hoffice in the jewnior de-partment."

"No insolence, fellow!" replied the other, and then

to himself, "Can he know?" (Aloud.) "Are you aware to whom you are speaking?"

"Can't say as I are," was the answer. "Never 'ad the pleasure afore, vich is wot the cove said when they hanged him for a hact of restitooshun."

"An act of restitution?" said Mr. Grinderby, inquiringly. "What might that be?"

"Vy, yer see, he knocked a lieyer on the 'ead vith a crowbar, and took his gold ticker from him."

"And do you call that restitution, you rascal?" said Grinderby; "you deserve to be given in charge."

"Vy, yer see, there wos two got back their hown—the devil got the lieyer hentire, and the poor a part of wot they'd been robbed of," said the Downy.

Mr. Grinderby changed the conversation. Possibly he did not wish at that precise moment to identify himself with his profession.

"Well," he said, with a scowl meant for a smile, "I see you don't care about earning a trifle. Money is so plentiful with you, I suppose."

"Oh, werry!" replied the Downy. "A large portion of the hinwisible capittle of the nation, as I heerd a helderly gent a talkin' of vunce on the knife-board of a City bus. But wot can I do for you, sir?"

"Just run into that public-house, my good fellow, and get yourself a glass of ale with this, and see if there is a tall man there with a beard—an American gentleman, dressed in a rough blue pilot-coat. He wears glasses, and—you can't mistake him."

The Downy departed on his mission, and Grinderby paced up and down. Whilst he was waiting, two

very different persons appeared on the scene, and met at the corner where he stood.

"Hallo! Swellingham," cried Stingray, as he nearly ran against that individual, who was leading a little girl by the hand, "is this the way you cut your old friends?"

"I beg pardon," replied Mr. Swellingham, "but really I did not observe — I was so preoccupied. I——"

"Just so, my dear fellow," replied the other; "I have not seen you, I don't know when. You are so altered, that I might have been well excused for not recognising *you*. How long is it?"

"Nearly four years, Mr. Stingray," was the answer.

"To judge by your appearance it might be ten," said Stingray. "You are positively quite grey. Large family, eh? Many of these cherubs?" pointing to the child, who was slender and pale, and had apparently somewhat outgrown her strength. "Now don't be in a hurry. I want to ask you a number of questions."

At this moment the Downy came out of the public-house and reapproached Grinderby.

STINGRAY (*to* SWELLINGHAM). Here, step aside one moment. I want to ask you——

GRINDERBY (*to* DOWNY). Well, was he there?

DOWNY. Not a crumb of him.

GRIN. Confound the fellow! He does not mean to come. Here (*to* DOWNY). You must take this note for me to a tavern in Deptford called the "One-Eyed Marine."

DOW. I knows. I went afore for yer, from Webb's Fields.

GRIN. The devil you did! Ha! ha! I dare say. The firm does a great deal in public-house business.

DOW. Hany answer?

GRIN. Yes—no! Leave the note. The gentleman will write by post.

DOW. Shall I call hin the Fields for—hanythink?

GRIN. Yes, to-morrow. I shall know by that time if the note be delivered all right.

DOW. (*aside*). Bless your himperence. D'ye take me for one of your own sort? D'yer think I'm going to make out a bill of costs without earnin' of 'em? To letters and messages vun pound vun? (*Aloud.*) I'll jest take a bob on haccount for hexpenses. Thank yer.

GRIN. Don't get drunk on the road. (*Aside.*) The impudent rascal. I must be off now. (*Aloud.*) Lose no time! (*Aside.*) I told Tops to be in the square exactly at the half-hour. It wants three minutes. I'll walk round and meet him. (*Exit* GRINDERBY.)

*Enter* TOPS *driving the "mourning-coach."*

TOPS. Hi! Have you seen an old gentleman? What! Why—can it be! Yes, it's the Downy himself, as I'm a sinner! Hallo, mate! is this the way you sarve an old pal?

DOW. Wot! Mister Tops! werry 'appy, I'm sure.

TOPS. You're a pretty feller never to come near a friend, you are. I've been a looking for you everywheres.

Dow. Vell, yer see, I ain't been courtin' popylarity much lately. Do these togs look like wisitin'?

Tops. It ain't the dress, Mr. Downy, that we invites of a Sunday, it's the party that wears it. We ain't seen you, not to speak to, ever since the shutters of the model corfy-shop was put up.

Dow. (*with a grimace*). Don't mention it! I say, though, I'm blest if hever you tasted sich corfy. Werry's, in Regent-street, was a fool to it. Everythink was spicy and no mistake, and this is the hend on't! And the nobs tell us, "Honesty's the best pollicy." Walker! They keeps the pollicy for themselves, and leaves us hall the honesty. But, I say, what a guy you air!

Tops. Legal huniform! Serious style. I'm living with old lawyer Grinderby.

Dow. You air! Then you're livin' with a—— but, no, I von't say nothin' agen your guvernor, young man, leastways viles he is your guvernor.

Tops. Won't you? Then I will, at least, afore long; for I'm going to leave him. Do you see this here bucket?

Dow. Wot, them flowers? Vell, rather; there's plenty on 'em. Wot's the caper? If you wos livin' vith a Jew gent, as had a shop in Covint Garding, or an 'orticultural party down Fulham vay, I might have twigged wot you was hup to better. Has old six-and-eight took to growin' carnations?

Tops. Not he. I don't mind telling you, that I'm wearing this nosegay in honour of *her* coming back to Hingland.

DOW. Her. What, Misses Susan? I never knowed she'd bin anyveres. Tell us hall about it.

TOPS. She's been gone nigh on four year, and I expect her this very evening from Paris along with her missis, a furren lady, a great Heyetalian singer.

DOW. Vell, I must hook it. I got to deliver this 'ere letter for your guvernor. He wos here jest now. (*Shows letter to* TOPS.)

TOPS (*reads*). "Captain Jonathan Bocombe Tadgers, care of Mr. Gruffem, 'The One-Eyed Marine,' Deptford." Whatever is the game, I wonder?

DOW. 'Tain't the first time I've been there, neither.

TOPS. Have you ever seen this Captain Tadgers?

DOW. Yes, and a rum lot he is too, I can tell you.

TOPS. I'd give harf a crown to clap eyes on him.

DOW. Down with it on the nail. There he is! a coming hout of that werry door—there, at that small public. He's come to meet the hold 'un, as 'ad got himpatient, and gone off without seein' of him.

TOPS. Here! Get some one to mind these 'osses' 'eads. No; you go and stop him, and get him to go in again, and give him the letter. I'll drop in accidental, and we'll reckon him up between us. Here's the needful. (*Tosses him half a crown.*)

The Downy went on his mission, without loss of time, and Tops soon managed to engage some one to look after the "mourning-coach," and the two old gaunt Flemish horses. We will leave them to their devices for a few minutes, while Mr. Stingray and Swellingham, with his little girl, reappear on the scene, still talking.

STING. My dear Swellingham, excuse me. Whose make are those trousers?

SWELL. A very cheap and honest fellow in the City. Are you in want of a tailor?

STING. Much obliged! (*Laughs.*) To tell the truth, I never did see such a cut. You are, indeed, an altered man, since the days I remember.

SWELL. Do you consider that clothes make the man? (*Aside.*) If so what a scoundrel his tailor ought to be; for he has clothed him in hypocrisy and baseness from head to foot.

STING. No! certainly not, but the very tone of your voice, your actual pronunciation, is quite changed.

SWELL. I dare say. The fact is, I am so busy that I can't attend to such matters. When one has a lot of these little mouths to fill (*looks at the child*), it does make a difference. Come, Belia, wish the gentleman good-bye.

STING. Do you call that a little mouth? A dear, good little thing; but frankly her mouth is not her best feature. You know I never flatter. She looks rather delicate.

SWELL. Delicate? Thank Heaven! she has never had a day's illness. I have not a sickly child among them all. Good day, Mr. Stingray!

STING. Stay! stay! You are not in such a hurry.

SWELL. Well, the fact is, that I have some friends coming to dinner—old Mrs. Snobbington, with her three eldest grandchildren, You remember poor Snob?

STING. Who could forget him! Talk about changes. Was ever one like that? To think, after his utter ruin, that he should have gone into the medical department in India. Few persons, save myself, knew that he had walked the hospitals in early life.

SWELL. He died, poor fellow! a victim to his exertions. What hero ever merited the cross of valour better than our old friend "Snob," as we used to call him? To have amputated the leg of a private soldier under the fire of the mutineers at Lucknow as coolly as if he were smoking a cigar! Nor was that more than an episode of his daily life. In his last letter to me thanking me for the little attention which I paid to his mother after they were so reduced in fortune, he said that nothing gave him so much pleasure as to mingle with those whom he had formerly deemed far beneath him, and whom he had studied to avoid and despise—the "soldier and the working man." "Believe me," he wrote, "the heart and brain of England are soundest among those who are not corrupted by wealth, nor enervated by luxury, whom Society has not made selfish, nor fashion hypocritical. What heroism is his, who, with the sternest valour and endurance, volunteers for the 'forlorn hope,' or breathes his last sigh without complaint in the hospital or the trenches, with the full persuasion on the one hand that, should he survive, an ungrateful country will leave him a beggar with his scars, and, on the other, that should he perish, his name, if not wholly unrecorded, will but swell the long list of the forgotten and the unknown. This is duty, indeed,

far outshining the star on the decorated breast. This, if I live, it will be the object of my humble efforts to place before my country in the most forcible terms I can command; this, if I die, it is at least a consolation to have known, to have met, and in some slight degree to have shared and alleviated."

STING. Very eloquent and enthusiastic indeed, but slightly absurd. I suppose, had he not died in India, we should have had the pleasure of reading a letter on the Delhi prize money, signed "A. Snobbington," in the "Times." By-the-bye, did you see Sir Crossbill Crossbill's observations about Phil Cousens's divorce?

SWELL. I did. He said if he were not the greatest fool, he was one of the greatest rogues to whom he had ever granted the aid of the Court.

STING. Capital! wasn't it? Knowing Phil and his excellent heart as we did! Ha! ha!

SWELL. He left the firm I believe nearly four years ago.

STING. Just after the Aubrey scandal. I wonder what has become of that poor wretch. Strange that he has not turned up as chief promoter of a Limited Liability Company, nor come out with a scheme for paying off the National Debt.

SWELL. Come, Bella!

STING. Just four years ago!

(SWELLINGHAM *gives some pence to his little girl for a beggar woman with a baby in her arms.*)

STING. Very wrong that! I never encourage street begging. I have a great mind to give her in charge to the police.

SWELL. You had better not.

STING. Why not?

SWELL. Hem! The charge might assume a more complex character; for (*sternly and defiantly*) if you did—— Come, Bella!

STING. Pooh-pooh! I was only joking. Of course if you like to amuse yourself by flying in the face of the law, I should not interfere with a friend's diversions. It puts me in mind of the flower-girl on the night of the suicide—the "garwotter," eh? (*Mimics* SWELLINGHAM'S *former style.*)

SWELL. (*firmly*). She lives in my family, and has been the beloved nurse of my children these three years.

STING. There were a good many changes about that time. Some six months after that the Duke of Chalkstoneville and Acres ended his virtuous days, and left Kitty Dareall fifty thousand pounds, with which that exemplary and accomplished young lady turned devotee, and head matron to a sort of hybrid preventive service institution for ladies without any ostensible means of existence. Ha! ha! What a gain to religion and morality!

SWELL. I don't see any change in you, Mr. Sting-ray.

STING. Has this dear little cherub of yours had small-pox?

SWELL. No! Why do you ask?

STING. Oh! nothing. The woman to whom she gave those coppers just now had her child covered with it—that is all. But doubtless your darling has been vaccinated. Good-bye, my dear friend. (*Seizes*

*his hand and shakes it warmly.*) I must go and secure a stall to hear the divine Bianca Stellini, who is expected here, if she has not arrived, and who makes her first appearance at the Opera on Thursday night. She has been the furore at St. Petersburg, Milan, Rome, and Naples during the past year. Nothing like her since poor dear Malibran. Her beauty and romantic history too—the widow of a young Polish officer killed in the British service in the Crimea—will insure her a splendid reception here. Ta! ta! (*Goes and returns.*) Now, don't distress yourself about the small-pox. It's better to have it early, you know. Bye, bye! (*And Mr. Stingray walked off to the great relief of Swellingham.*)

"What a horrid, wicked man, papa!" said the child. "Isn't he a wicked man?"

"Indeed he is, my dear," replied Swellingham; "and yet he has the credit of having a good heart. I would back the instincts of one innocent child," he continued, as if to himself, "against the general opinion of the world in a case like his. True enough, he is not much changed, though I dare say his vices have grown greyer with his hair. All the change is for the worse, as the critics say of his books. Still Society deems this vivisector of humanity tender-hearted, and dubs him a philanthropist and a sage. Sage and onions to stuff geese withal—the onions to draw tears over his sickly sentiment and maudlin rhodomontade. I don't believe a word about the small-pox. But we'll get outside an omnibus, darling, and purify ourselves from *his* contact as we can."

And with this speech Mr. Swellingham took little

Bella by the hand and led her towards Regent-street, in search of an omnibus, meeting, as he did so, a trio emerging from the public-house door already mentioned. These were Captain Tadgers, the Downy, and Tops.

These individuals paused to exchange a few words before Tops remounted the box-seat of the "mourning-coach."

Captain Tadgers was a stout and tall personage, with a dark countenance, strong black beard, and apparently weak eyes, for which he wore a pair of green spectacles of the description "blinker." He was attired in rough pea-coat buttoned up high round his throat. He looked like a Yankee supercargo or stevedore, and possibly he was something of the kind.

"Waal," said this individual, addressing the Downy, "I calculate you're about as harmless a crittur as ever I see. I'll just tell you what you oughter du, and that's to jine a tribe of our Red Injins. They'd make something out of a poor half-witted cuss like you, I reckon. I tell you they'd give you free livin'."

"I suppose you mean the savages by the Injins," said Tops. "Would they take a fancy to my friend here now?"

"They'd be some pumkins on him, I tell you, strainger. The Injins always have a great respect for mad folks. I should think you air about half-baked" (to the Downy), "ain't yer?"

"The Parish allers said so," responded the Downy, meekly.

"Waal, anyhow you were sharp enough to save your legs a journey, when you saw me jest now; I dare say you'll have another letter to deliver before long at the 'One-Eyed Marine.' Don't stop on the road, or I'll tar and feather you, I will by——"

"I suppose you've bin in England before," said Tops.

"That's my consarn," said the other. "I suppose maybe I have; and I don't find it growed much since I was here when a youngster. Why, we annex a country bigger than yourn every year! We could put this island in one of our lakes, without spilling a drop of water over the sides. As for this coon, the Injins is the best speckylation for him. They'll make him a medicine-man and treat him handsome. I knew an Irishman what jined a tribe, and got drunk at their expense every day till he died. Now and then he'd give them a jig, and I've known 'em go to war on the strength of an extra fling, when he'd had a drop more than his reg'lar allowance. Waal, I reckon I'm off." And so saying Captain Tadgers suited the action to the word, and without compliment or salutation, unless spitting half across the street might be taken for such, he quietly strode out of sight.

"Whatever can old Grinderby want along with him?" said Tops to the Downy. "But you must come along with me. I've a deal to ask you. I want to hear all about the 'inwestment,' as you used to call it, and how you was wound up, and what you've been a doing of since, and all the rest of it."

"Wound hup?" said the Downy, taking his seat

on the box. "I should think I were wound hup, and it would take the Court of Chance-ry to hunvind me, and I don't believe as they could do it, no not hif all the lieyers was to try for a 'undred years. They'd get me in such a precious tangle, that I'd never be hunvound no more in this vorld, and the knots vould 'ave to be took out of me in the next by a special mercy of Prowidenx. Vy I vent for three 'undred and fifty pound hover and above my capittle. Bless yer, vy I wos a bankrup' and put in the 'Gayzette.' D'ye call that nothing?"

"No, I should have called it something, if you'd owed me the money," answered Tops. "But how was it a chap like you, as I always took to be honest, got in sich a precious mess? You wasn't a 'limited lie-ability,' was you?"

"Vell," said the Downy, "I wos a doin' pretty vell, in spite of the debts owin' to me, ven a chap as took his corfy reg'lar of a mornin', he proposed to git me a pardner."

"Was he a lieyer?" asked Tops.

The Downy nodded.

"And you was soft enough to let him meddle with the consarn? I sees it all," said Tops, touching up his horses judicially.

"Vell," said the Downy," "he wos a civil-spoken sort of gent enough, and he axed me vun day about the capittle and the bis'ness, and said he shouldn't charge nothink, and he didn't neither. Forty-nine pound seventeen and fourpence ha'penny ain't exactually nothink, is it? Them lieyers never leaves out the ha'penny. It looks so werry special and pertickler.

That wos his figure, and wot's more he got it. He borrered the last fifty from me the veek afore I wos wound hup."

"And how did you get through the Court?" inquired Tops.

"There wern't no sort of difficulty," replied the other. "You see I never kep' no accounts, vich saved a sight of trouble, and the judge he larfed fit to burst hisself, ven I hexplained how it were. He said my lieyer ought to be struck hoff his rolls, and I said I believed he were, as vell as his corfy and butter and heggs, as soon as my shutters wos hup. 'He allers liked his rolls werry 'ot, my lord,' ses I, 'as vell as his corfy.' 'And didn't he pay for what he had?' axed the judge. 'No,' my lord,' ses I. 'I were to take it hout in hadwice gratis.' 'See wot you've brought this poor man to,' says his lordship to my pardner, werry sewere. 'I do believe he's not to blame,' he ses. 'You never spoke better truth,' ses I, 'in your life, vich is more nor I expected from any vun here.' Then they all larfed. 'Silence!' ses his lordship. 'I shall give him a first-class certifycate,' he ses. But didn't he come down on my pardner, and said he ought to be transported. Vell, hever since that, I've been agoin' on in the hold line. Sometimes I've a bit of grub and to spare, and sometimes nothink. If it wosn't for the vinter, I vouldn't care. Do you think there's any truth in wot that cove from Amerikey said about them there Injins, mate? I've a mind to try it on, if I thought it wos safe. But I sticks to life, as much as hif I wos a bishop."

"I don't think they'd eat you, if they did kill

you," said Tops; "unless the cannibals is fond of grilled bones, and I don't think they'd ever fatten you, if they was to try."

"I say," said the Downy, as if seized by a sudden inspiration, "who d'ye think I see, jest afore I met you? I wos agoin' to tell yer, ven you sent me after that ere wot's-his-name in sich a hurry. It's about the hout-and-houtest rummy go, that I should 'ave run agen him and you too in the same arternoon that hever I did know."

"Can't say," replied Tops. "Was it the little chap as sung the song about the pleeceman the day as you opened the corfy-shop?"

"No!" said the Downy, "kvite a different sort; vun as it'll make me sad to think on, ven I turns into my four-pennorth this evenin'. Vun as you knowed vell, ven he wos a sight better hoff than he is now, and vun as I'm sorry I let go afore I'd rightly twigged as it wos him. Not that I could do anythink of hany account for him. It was your old guvernor."

Perhaps it was as well that the two old Flemish horses were worthy of the names Tops had given them; for had they been a skittish or restive pair, it is likely that the mourning-coach would have come to grief at that moment. Tops fairly let the whip and reins fall out of his hands, and turning round he seized the Downy by the throat and shook him in the excess of his emotion.

"What!" he cried, "my old master—Mister—Aubrey?"

"Loose yer hold, vill yer? D'ye vant to throttle

a feller?" exclaimed the Downy. "Loose yer hold, I say."

Tops burst out laughing almost hysterically as he released his hold on his companion. He then deliberately got down and gathered up the reins.

"Here! Hold them," he said, "whilst I pick up the persuader, and so saying he ran after the whip, which a small boy had already seized, and was flourishing about the heads and legs of a number of his fellows.

"Hooray!" shouted one; "look at his coat-tails, Bill." "I say, master," cried another, "you've bin a robbin' the beadle." "Twig the cove on the box!" "Vy he's picked up Jack Ketch's nevvy." "They was a millin' like mad, jest now." "Drive hoff, muffin-face, and leave him behind!" "He'll never catch yer in that long tog of hisn." "You've been airing the hen-roost, that's wot that old trap's been used for." Presently the nearest urchin sent a potatoe just between Tops and the Downy, as the former whipped up "Dogsmeat" and "Catsmeat," and drove off, followed by the acclamations of the crowd.

"Did you say you really see Mr. Aubrey? And when was it?" asked Tops in a husky tone.

"I see him jest afore I see you," replied the Downy.

"Are you sure it was him?" inquired Tops.

"I ain't quite a fool, though I sometimes looks like vun. D'yer think I don't know him agen?"

"And is he very poor and bad off?" asked Tops.

"It's pretty nigh hall hup vith him, I'm afeard," replied the Downy. "I spoke to him, but he was

hoff like a shot. I'll tell yer wot it is, I'd ha' guv him the last bob I got in the vurld, if he'd a' took it, for I never forgets a kindness; and I don't like to see a real gent down on his luck to sich a pint as never wos meant to stand it. I didn't know you would a' took on so grievious about him, or I'd a' broke it gently. I respex your feelinx, young man, but blow your hemotion! You pretty nigh strangled me, and s'pose the 'osses had bolted."

"They ain't got a bolt in 'em. They couldn't bile up a gallop atween 'em, not if they was engaged 'special,' as you call it, for the Lord Chancellor's own funeral, as was wanted very sudden below. T'other day a 'gent' said they were such a pair of old Romans, they'd have committed suicide long ago, if they only knowed how. Victuals is no use to them, no, nor grooming neither. But my time is up this day month; for I told old Grinderby to suit himself this morning. Look here, mate, you must find Mr. Aubrey for me at once. There ain't a letter in which my Susan hav'n't asked me if I hav'n't heard no news of him. If he's about, as you say, why his address must be collared—that's all. But I'm afraid your eyes have deceived you this time."

"I vish I wos as certain of twenty pound a-year," said the Downy. "If I'd honly seen him ven he wos a swell, and not knowed hanythink of him arter his misfortins, I might be mistook. But I'd svear to him anyveres, if he wos disguised as the Hemperor of Morroky, or the Chief Commissioner of Bobbies at the openin' of Parlyment; and he beats Ashley's holler, if he could honly sit his 'oss less like a sack

of peas vith a cocked 'at on. Vy, I'd tell your old guvernor's woice among a thousand. He's growed a beard, and it's turned a little grey along vith his 'air. And he's a sight thinner, and stoops. But vot's the hodds to a man of hobserwation? Ven I knows a man, I knows him; and I ain't likely to be took in by haccidental ressemblance like the perlice, cos I ain't got to get up no ewidents agen a hinnocent party."

"You didn't speak to him, Mr. Downy?" asked Tops.

"In course I did," replied that gentleman.

"And he answered you?"

"He did."

"And what did he say?"

"He said he wos not beggin', and no more he wos for that matter."

"You didn't—insult him!" said Tops.

"No more than offerin' to stand 'arf a pint, afore I'd propperly hentered on his recognisinzes," said the Downy, who for once mistook the meaning of a term which he had picked up.

"And didn't you foller him?"

"Vy should I? Wot vould 'ave bin the use? If I could 'ave done him hany good, I'd 'ave follered him fast enough. And wot's more, H. Downy, Eskvire, ain't on the private hinspection lay, vich I takes to be jest about the meanest, lyingest, thievingest, humbugginest set-out in this here blessed willage of London."

"We must find him now. Me and Susan has saved up a tidy penny, but we'll spend the last

farthin', sooner than not do it. She says it's my duty, and I feels it is, here," said Tops, pressing the handle of his whip across his left side. "It's got to be done, that's what it has, you see. Now, if you'll git down here, I'll put the 'osses up, and join you in about an hour. It'll take that time, for I acts just the same by these precious old screws, as if they would fetch five hundred guineas at the Corner. You shall go with me to the wharf to meet Susan and her missus, a celybrated furren singer, this evening. They prefer coming all the way by the boat, and so should I for that matter; for I'd rather be drownded right off, than be half mashed, or made a idiot of by a railway accident. Fancy sitting opposite such a customer as old Grinderby, and having his buck teeth sticking in your forehead!"

"But don't his sort go by sea jest as hoften?" asked the Downy. "How vould you like to be cotched round the neck by a drowndin' lieyer, as you cotched hold of me jest now? I'll tell yer what it is. Travellin' don't get rid of bad company, or I should 'a begun the grand tower ven I cum of age, and not pulled hup in a jiffy neither. Did yer never 'ear of the Vanderin' Jew, the holdest clothesman in the vurld? It's my hopinion that he vos vunce the senior pardner of an uncommon respectabil firm of sollycitors in Jeerusylum."

"There was no solicitors in those days, I've heard said, "replied Tops. "It's a modern institooshun."

"Modern rope's-end! Is lies modern, and rattlesnakes and pison? Vere did hall the vickedness horiginally cum from? I've heerd different. There

wos a chap used to preach on Primrose-'ill, and he said there wos lieyers and plenty in Jeerusylum. And wot's more, there wos vun on 'em in Pairadice as tempted Heve with a golden pippin. The firm vos Sattin, Sarpent and Co., and the bill wos made hout to Hadam on a fig-leaf, and ven he couldn't shell out, hexecution wos issued. It's bin agoin' on ever since, and there's more on 'em than hever now, owing to the hincrease of crime and poppylation."

Tops looked at his quaint companion and shook his head, and then nodded two or three times, as much as to say, "It's no use to argue the point, and perhaps you're not altogether wrong," and the pair entered another public-house, where they had another half-pint very amicably together.

"This evening," said Tops, "at eight o'clock, at the wharf below London Bridge. Ask for the Bullong boat, and you'll find me waiting."

"Hall serene, guvernor!" was the cheerful response, and the pair parted company; Tops resuming his seat with all the dignity which the long tails of his snuff-coloured "uniform" imparted to him.

"He's as right a sort," quoth the Downy, looking after him, "as I hever see, and ven ve meets sich a vun, it's enough to reckinsile us to the vickedness of the hupper classes. I don't beleeve, if he wos to come into a thousand a-year it would spile that man's disposishun. If he wos to take to the grocery line, he'd ruin hisself vith sellin' good licker, that's wot he'd do, and there's some as can't be honest on millions. It ain't in 'em. There ain't no capittle in Hingland, as vould tempt me to go into bis'ness agen, and there's a

many as only looks on their certyficates of bankrupsy as tickets-of-leave to enable 'em to go in for a more howdacious svindle. Vell, I'll jest go and look arter that pore gent in trouble. I shouldn't vonder if he come back agen vere I fust see him. Ven a cove is 'omeless, he generally takes to some pertickler spot hout o' doors, as if he vanted to hold on to somethink."

So saying, the Downy hurried back to St. George's Church, and only stopped for three "two-pennorths" on the way, a token that he considered the business of importance. But he was not fated to find Aubrey, although his view as to the probability of that unfortunate being's return to the spot where he had seen him was by no means ill-founded. At the very moment when the Downy informed Tops of his chance rencontre, Aubrey had in truth revisited the portico of St. George's Church, where he leant against a pillar and half thought, half muttered, the following incoherent sentences:

"There is nothing left now—no hope—my very identity seems lost. I am a stranger in this vast, awful city. No one recognises me, no one sympathises with me, no one pities my sufferings. Pity! No, I could not brook that. I wonder if any one would recognise my corpse, if I were to put an end to this misery and die! I am utterly and entirely alone. For nearly two years I was haunted by the ghost of a fortune, and hunted by the reality of duns. For a long time after I was beggared, there were persons who wanted either to beg or borrow from *me*. And, now, ha! ha! I do not even create an

impression in a casual ward. In the beginning the brutal officials used, I believe, to take me for an impostor in the ranks of misery, a sensational writer in disguise, or a madman. As if any one, save a madman, would essay that purgatory twice! At first, when I was poor and in difficulties, I seemed to have a talent for becoming acquainted with those who were in difficulties and poor. Now I get acquainted with no one. I have no longer a shilling to share. I used to think there was propagation in poverty. Now I see that it is leprous and epicene. At first how many broken clerks, superannuated servants, distressed beings of both sexes, cropped up as if in mockery, when I could barely earn bread myself. Forgotten debts, too, met me at every turn. Some wretched woman with a babe seemed produced or invented by the fantastic decree of Fate to ask me for a penny to cross a bridge, or to give a loaf to her child, when I had nothing, literally nothing to bestow. When I have been faint with hunger myself, I have been persecuted by the piteous iteration of want. What a terrible thing it is to be a beggar among beggars, to have empty pockets and be dunned by the ghastly shapes of woe! I feel sometimes as if I could shout aloud to awaken deafened luxury, and die content in thought that some poor creatures were better for my misery. Oh, what foul, cold-blooded, chronic massacre of helpless childhood, what worse than barbaric sacrifice of the aged and infirm, what godless, soulless, compassionless tyranny reigns around! The butcher holidays of Rome, what were they to the Christian Sabbath of starvation? The san-

guinary Moloch was sometimes gorged and appeased, the bloodless yellow spectre of Mammon never, never! Day and night the skeleton crowds expire. Tens of thousands, nay millions of priests and Levites pass by, not even 'on the other side.' They gaze coldly, or fiercely, on the misery they do not pity, much less alleviate. Every hour, every minute, a Lazarus dies. Boards and Corporations of Herods sit curiously considering how to slaughter infancy, without the plea of the fear which makes despots cruel, while they seek to attach the odium to the Divinity Whom they insult with the lie of their hypocritical worship. That poor wretch whom I met here—he was very poor—would have shared his alms with me, had I suffered him. Thank Heaven! there is an end even to sufferings like mine. A second time, there has been an execution in my wretched abode, and my means of existence are remorselessly destroyed. They would listen to no promise, no plea for time. My very papers and manuscripts are gone; I have not the heart to seek to reclaim them. And what if I could? Even the play on which I founded such hopes was stolen, as that cynical old reporter told me it would be, by my old college friend, the successful playwright of the day, and has proved in his name a brilliant success. I have not even a copy of it, and if I had, what could I do? If I take him by the throat, can I shake truth out of him? No, only lie upon lie! I should but be imprisoned; a mark and butt for obloquy, derision, and scorn. Poverty has no champion, no friend. I have often thought of that old Latin motto of my school days, 'Nihil durius in

se paupertas habet, quam quod ridiculos homines facit.' My health is breaking fast. Why, why did I recover from the fever which drove me forth, till I was found, as it was supposed, the victim of an accident, in the streets, bruised, and torn, and bleeding? So they took me to a hospital, and the surgeons set my broken limb. They would not have relieved mere poverty unembellished by an accident. I saw the account of it in the 'Standard'—'A poor author knocked down and run over in the streets.' Some charitable persons subscribed nearly fifty pounds, but the magistrate would only hand over ten; because he did not think that I gave a clear account of myself. My destitution and misery were not sufficient testimony for me to receive such a fortune. He talked of committing me as a vagrant and impostor! I have tried hard to live. Everything has failed. One editor thought me too ambitious. Another did not believe my efforts to be 'original,' he said; and so he mislaid my manuscript, which was afterwards used by a creature of his own, a toady who flatters him, and does the 'padding,' as it is called, of his magazine. I am homeless, roofless, and without means. What will become of me? No matter. When the rain beats on my burning breast, and the wind chills my aching limbs, I do not curse Fortune, but cry aloud in anguish, 'Blanche! dear departed angel, Blanche! thou art avenged, thou art avenged!'"

Such is an epitome of the thoughts which crowded through the brain of the unhappy Aubrey, and which sometimes his lips would, in part, mechanically utter.

In the height of bitterness and misery, men will sometimes talk aloud. It is generally so in the last stage, before madness or premature death. Surely Aubrey had suffered enough to win forgiveness for his sins. But the cup of expiation was not yet full enough to spill a libation to offended Fortune. Of remorse in this world, as of suffering worth, there is taken no visible account. Honesty is the best worldly policy, when honesty succeeds. Remorse well and piously expressed, may procure for a convicted felon indulgence, and even freedom. But were virtue always marketable, always sure of valuable appreciation, mankind would become so insufferably good, that hypocrisy would sicken with a general surfeit and die. What merit would there be in avoiding wickedness which never could by any means pay, in cutting pauper vices, and turning a deaf ear to the insolvent whine of every beggarly Sin soliciting alms from a proudly prosperous soul? No, the experience of the Psalmist is not that of the later epochs of the world's history: "I have been young and am now old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." Can the most venerable father of the Church lay his hand upon his heart, and say, without reservation, that this is so. If it be, is it not rather the case with those who have made religion the stalking-horse of worldly greed? "The distressed daughters of a deceased clergyman" are not altogether unknown to the advertisement sheets of the daily press. Yet who shall therefore impeach the decrees of Heaven, and say that it is not

within the scope of Divine Justice that injustice reigns upon earth? The Whig party always remains longest in office; and an authority which we are inclined to believe sometimes, has declared that "the devil was the first Whig," and suggested compromise and expediency, in a word, political hypocrisy, to mankind.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A SISTER OF CHARITY AND HER BRETHREN.

Je iure par mon salut éternel, et par les sainctes Évangiles cy présentez soubz ma main tenir ceste femme pour un ange; vivant en toute honnesteté, pleine de vertueux advis, nullement maulvaise, aydant moult les pauouvres et souffreteux . . . . Ceste amour naïfvement unie à la repentance, ceste noblesse dedans la coulpe, cettuy meslange de foiblesse et de force eussent, comme disent les anciens autheurs, muté le charactère des tigres, en les attendrissant.— *Contes de Balzac.*

In a plainly furnished parlour in Guilford-street, Russell-square, sat a lady attired in plain half-mourning, reading a volume of Essays from the "Times." The "Life of Emma, Lady Hamilton," was the subject she had chosen. As she read that wondrous tale of glory and perfidy, of light and darkness, greatness and littleness, of superb, meretricious, rose-coloured triumph, and flabby, ghastly, hideous ingratitude and narrowness of mind, indignation and horror by turns flushed and paled her expressive face. As she read the sad, sad end—the story of the lap-dog fed with delicate meats, while the soiled idol of England's best-loved hero lay starving in her miserable garret alone; as she learnt how Nelson's goddess, his Egeria, his beloved one, died, and how the corpse of her, whom monarchs

and princes honoured, and whom their wives and daughters flattered and imitated, was thrust into a French pauper coffin, and flung into a pauper exile's grave, she shut the book, and the big tears gathered under her long dark lashes, and rolled heavily one by one down her cheeks.

"And I have been weak enough," she said, "sometimes to repine at the lot I have chosen, and to regret the vanities which I have cast aside! And, oh! what a lesson is here. Truly I have lost, I have sacrificed *nothing;* and what may I not have gained, nay, what rather have I not already won? Last night those darling little faces of the children in the school-room in Soho smiled upon me in my sleep. Let me read this letter again," she said, "that I may recover the serenity which that story has for a moment destroyed."

"Bless you, bless you, dear lady! you have saved me from worse than death. My poor father is recovering fast. Mother tells me that had I not come, he must have died. As soon as he is well enough, we are all going to Melbourne, Australia." (Good, that is well.) "No one knows anything for certain here. They think I have been in service; but I could not bear to keep up any deceit, and so we are going away. Father desires me to tell you that he remembers you night and morning in his prayers. Mother begs you will accept her duty, and the few things she has sent. She says she is sorry that the fowls are not so fine as some she has had earlier in the season. Oh, madam! what has not your angelic goodness saved me

from? I should have been a murderess, but for you; *his* murderess, my poor dear father's, who clasped me to his heart, and who has never said an unkind word since I came back. 'Annie,' he said, 'I thought you had gone away from your old father for ever, and I have been trying to think how I could have driven thee away from home, child.' *He* drive me away? He never said a harsh thing to me in his life. He was only too good to an ungrateful wretch. If, dear lady! you see him who deceived me, as you said you would, say that I forgive him, and please ask him for my picture which he had done, and destroy it. It is the likeness of a wicked, heartless girl, who believed a stranger, and forgot her old father, who would have died, but for you. He is going to be married next month at St. George's Church to a rich lady, when I shall be far away at sea. I hope he will be kind to her, but doubt it, poor thing! I hear she is very plain and quite lame; but she is rich, and that may make a difference—may it not? She will have many to protect her, but never, *never* a friend like you. After I left, father fell down in a fit. He will always have the scar, the doctor says, to his grave. When I saw it, I could not help crying; and what do you think father pretended and tried to make me think? He said he fell off a ladder nailing up the grape-vine. And mother says it was true enough he did. *But he didn't get that hurt then*, though he bruised his arm bad enough. Nothing, dear lady, in this wide wicked world could ever tempt me to do wrong again, even if I had not loved him who behaved to me so false and cruel, and left me at that dreadful place to

starve or worse—little he cared which! I know many say that a girl who has once done as I have is not to be trusted, and is certain to sin again. But if I had another heart, and could believe in another as I believed in *him*, again; and if I could forget all your words, the night when you kissed me and pressed my hand and called me sister, till I thought my heart would burst, I should only have to look at that scar on father's forehead to hate and loathe the tempter and resist every evil prompting to wrong. My eldest sister's sneers would have no terrors for me—not if the whole village turned their backs upon me, would I dream of leaving the old man again. I would delight in bearing all for his sake, and to seem happy lest he should feel sad. I shall see you once, dear friend and lady, before the vessel sails—shall I not?

"I am, ever,

"Your once lost but now saved and grateful *sister*, since you *will* have me call you so,

"ANNIE WEBBER."

"Poor child," said the lady, musing, "I do believe all that she says. But I am glad on every account that she is going away. Else she might find the revilings of the uncharitable too bitter to endure. I can just fancy that domestic Gorgon of a sister of hers talking religion at her, till the poor girl is nearly driven mad. This is what too often makes home impossible to one whose loving and confiding disposition has been betrayed. This letter has done me good."

Here a plain thin little girl, about twelve years old,

entered the room. She walked up to the lady very quietly and said, "Shall I do any work now, ma'am, or will you hear me read?"

The lady patted her head and replied, "You shall do your sewing first, my dear. Have you fed that poor little dog?"

"Oh, yes, and he seemed so glad," said the child. "He *did* lick my hand."

Presently a servant-girl came in, after knocking timidly at the door. She was very pretty, but pale and downcast. "If you please, ma'am," she said, "my uncle is come, and wishes to know if he may see you, ma'am." And the girl coloured very deeply, as if there was something remarkable in this announcement.

"Show him in, Mary," was the answer. "My dear" (to the little girl), "take your sewing with you, and go with Mary. You shall come in again in a few minutes."

A rough, brutal, obstinate-looking man, with a lean, sharp, showily-dressed woman, was shown in by the trembling Mary.

"You wanted to see me, I've been told," said the man, rather gruffly. "I've 'ad some trouble to come here all the way from Chelsea. It's about this girl, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied the lady. "She is, I understand, a near relation of yours, and has lived with you as a sort of servant for some time."

"She's lived with us, true enough," said the man, "and assisted in the house-work, I believe; but after

the manner in which she left, I don't want to 'ave nothing more to do with her."

"I'm sure," struck in the woman who had come with him, who we may presume was his wife, "that for all the use she was to us, we've never missed her; a bold, impudent, artful slut as she is, and so kind to her as we've been. To think of the wine and things I've give that girl, and there isn't a word bad enough for us in her mouth. But she couldn't keep from the fellows, and what could any one expect? The sight as she'd leave my five children in, and never a step scoured, nor a knife nor shoe cleaned, for that matter, at nine o'clock of a morning. But you see what it's come to, and she pretending to be afraid of black beedles and rats! I'm sure, if I'd had my way, I'd have sent her about her business long before; but my husband he's such a good-natured fool, you know you are, Nixon. He put up with her ways a precious sight too long. My father kep' his chaise and was quite a gentleman I can assure you, though we do take in lodgers now, more's the pity, and that lazy hussy couldn't wait on them." (The truth is that her father kept a small chandler's shop, and Nixon was his apprentice, and first seduced and then married her, or she did him).

"This is not what I want to know," replied the lady, mildly but firmly. "The girl, I understand, is under age, and you" (to the man) "are her nearest relation—is it not so? Now I am willing to take her, to clothe her, feed her, and educate her; but I must have a written authority from you, that if I do so, you will not interfere. Is it not true that you turned her

out into the streets bareheaded and barefooted in the night, bearing the marks of cruel bruises?——"

"If you mean to say that me or my missus ever set fingers on the gal," interrupted the man, "it's a —— lie, and I'll make you prove it. Who are you, interfering with other folk's affairs? Perhaps no better than you should be for all you are so quiet and gen-teel. I tell you, I'll have the law of you, if you dare to say a word agen me."

"And pretending to believe a parcel of lies," screamed his spouse, "about that wretch as blacked her arms a purpose, and robbed us, yes, robbed us. Didn't I find ever so many things in her box? Wasn't she always talking to the lodger's servant through the little window of their kitchen—didn't she rob them, too, as they told me of? If I was Nixon here, *I'd* sign a character for her, *I'd* let her off easy, *I* would! *I'd* sooner foller her everywhere, and let the perlice know what she is. *I'd* let her impose upon other people's charity, as she has on ours! Yes, with a rope's-end! And to go and disgrace my husband's fammerly as she has done, breeding parish bastards, and me the daughter of a gentleman used to very different ways, and to have my own servants to wait on me, before I married, which Nixon there knows" (that gentleman made no sign of acquiescence or dissent), "if he'd only speak hout like a man. Character, indeed! I'd character her with hoakum-picking, that's what she's fit for, with the other convicts. I'd lay a good strap about her back, and send her to gaol." Here Mrs. Nixon paused to get her breath.

"Madam," said Mrs. Wilmington (for such was the name of the benevolent lady, who had taken this poor girl's part), "I think you will find on reflection, that nothing has been said about a character for this young person. I merely want to know whether, if I provide for her in future, your husband will give me a guarantee against any interference on his part as her next of kin, and indeed, I believe, sole relation. Have you any objection to this, sir?" she asked that lowering and obstinate British shop-keeper, who was beginning to exhibit symptons of vindictive impatience.

"If he haven't, *I* have," began the British matron, his wife, "I can tell you. Why shouldn't he hinterfere when and 'ow he chooses?"

"Hold yer tongue, will yer?" said Nixon, who was a strange compound of connubial fierceness and endurance, in his way. "Look h'yer, ma'am! If you think George Nixon is agoing to sign anything towards renouncing his rights in this or any matter, you're mistaken, and I wish you hadn't given me this trouble to come all the ways here. I've got my business to attend to, I can tell you. As for my brother's daughter there, all I can say is, that he never could earn his own living, and when he left that girl, I took her under my own roof and kep' her as long as she chose to go right, and if you've got her now, I wish you joy of her. Here, M'ria" (to his wife) "—— it, what do you stand staring there for like a stuck pig? Come along, will yer! The next time" (to Mrs. Wilmington) "you send for G. Nixon, I wish you'd let him know what it's about

aforehand, that's all." So saying, he put his hat on his head, and clutched hold of his wife's arm to drag her out.

"Stop!" said Mrs. Wilmington, "I did not wish to avail myself of any other means at my disposal, in order to obtain what I require, than an appeal to your sense of justice and better feeling——"

"Stuff; gammon!" interpolated Mr. Nixon. "Shut up! I ain't got no time to listen to such nonsense—such nonsense!" he almost shouted. "Any one can see as you are no lady. Come out of this, I say" (to his wife); "I've got my business to attend to."

"Such imperence, dear!" said Mrs. Nixon, bridling. She wanted to coax the brute to let her have her say. "Such imperence, George. Jest wait and let me tell this person, which I don't think is over respectable herself, a bit of my mind."

"You'd stand here bawling and screeching like a parrot all the arternoon, I tell yer. I know a trick worth two of that. I got my business to see to; and I wish this lady, if she is one, would pay me for my time as I've lost already. I shan't sign nothing, and you may jest look out, enticing folks away like this from their homes." (He forgot he and his wife had turned the girl out of their house a twelvemonth before.) "When you want G. Nixon, you know where to find him."

"I repeat that I didn't wish to have recourse to constraint," said Mrs. Wilmington.

"Ha! ha!" from Nixon.

"Do you know this card and writing?" handing him a letter. "Nay, read it, you are welcome."

"My dear Madam,—I believe the lease of the house in Cheyne-row expires in September. Anything I can do in furtherance of your benevolent plans, I will at all times do, you may rely on it. You may command me in everything.

"Ever, my dear madam,

"Yours most faithfully,

"Tachbrooke."

The jaw of the delightful specimen of the British tradesman, whom we have endeavoured to depict, actually fell. No wonder; for the bully died within him. The writer of the letter was his landlord, the powerful and wealthy earl, whom he worshipped, could he be said to worship anything, with all his abject soul, if one might dignify his thinking essence with such a name. He handed the letter to his wife, who read it and returned it aghast. She was the first to come to herself.

"I'm sure, ma'am," she began, "anything that we can do, as I said to Nixon coming here—didn't I, my dear?—we should only be too 'appy. I never wished my George's niece any harm, as it wasn't likely I should, and we did all we could to keep her from going wrong. Many's the time I've said to her, which she'd tell you if she was here in this room, if she's a mite of truth in her, 'Mary, my dear girl! you're my husband's brother's child, and it's my duty

to bring you up and keep you out of harm,' which I'm sure we tried to, as a many could testify, and which is Gospel truth. It wasn't our fault, if she was led astray and turned against her own 'ome and her own flesh and blood by wicked and designing folks, as ought to have knowed better" (whimpers). "I will say for her that she's not a bad-dispositioned girl of herself, though she is not a hard worker, and her constitution's not strong. But I should say she'd suit you to a T, which is what I tell my husband somebody else did him, when he married her." (Here Mrs. Nixon grinned horribly a thin and ghastly smile.) "Of course, since my husband's misfortunes, and my father's ruin, owing to his being surety for a friend, we couldn't afford to keep Mary altogether, without expecting her to work for her living, which is no more than I do myself."

How long she would have continued we cannot tell; but Mrs. Wilmington gently interrupted her. "I do not wish for any explanations," said that lady. "I believe I know all the story. All I want is a written agreement on your husband's part, not to molest the girl during the next two years and before she is of age, and a release from any claim he might bring for maintenance."

Mr. Nixon had contented himself with removing his hat, and scratching his huge head.

"I won't stand in the girl's way, my lady!" he said, "and I'll do anything in reason, you wish. I'm sure we're well shut of the girl——" Here his spouse pulled his coat sleeve so hard, that he suddenly stopped.

"And I'm sure," said his wife, "I should be 'appy to take the poor baby, and bring it up with my children. I'm the mother of a family; and I dare say you won't mind allowing a trifle for its keep, which you can reduct from her wages. Blood is thicker than water, as I said to G. N., when we was coming here. You said you wouldn't mind my making the offer, George, you know you did, as we were driving through the Park."

"I am obliged to you on Mary's behalf for your benevolent intentions, but her offspring is dead," said Mrs. Wilmington, coldly. "It died, I believe, of poverty and neglect."

"Lord a' mercy! poor little angel!" cried Mrs. Nixon. "Well, she's gone to a better world."

"It was a boy," observed the lady, "and has been dead these six months."

"Well, ma'am," said Nixon, "I shan't stand in the way of anything that is reasonable. I suppose you won't mind allowing us something for her keep. We had her — let's see—four year. There's her clothes and hedication, say forty pound. Ten pound a-year ain't too much, I hope."

"A great deal too much," was the reply, "for blows, neglect, starvation, and the streets, to which you drove her. A great deal too much, for the cruel shame you have brought on your only brother's only child. Not another word! I wish to abstain from comments, which you will do well not to provoke. My terms are these; you will accept them, or not, as you please. You will sign this paper, which is a simple release of all claim on this poor child, and

any clothes or property she may acquire. You will send here the box which you opened, after you turned her into the streets, with the few little articles, left her by her father, which are in this list. On my part, I shall consent not to expose you, for her sake, and not to claim the money you had for the sale of her father's goods, and the trifle in cash, something under fifty pounds, which he left you for her use."

The honest tradesman approached the table and took up a pen. He perused and signed the document without a word, scowled heavily at his wife to impose silence on her, and then advanced towards the door. "I suppose, ma'am," he said gruffly, "that now I've done what you've asked, I may depend upon your saying nothing to his lordship. I want to renew my lease, and I've a large family. I'm a hard-working chap, a little rough may be, but my rent is safe, and I pay my taxes reg'lar. 'Taint my fault if my missus and the girl couldn't agree."

"I am sure, George!" began his wife.

"Silence! you fool! D'ye want to ruin me with that tongue of yourn. It was you did all the mischief along of Mary. After all, the girl wasn't so bad, and a precious sight better than any you've picked up with since."

It was a hard struggle for his lady, but she had the sense to hold her tongue this time; for she feared the weight of her affectionate husband's arm, when his wrath was fairly aroused by a pecuniary loss.

"See that you use the poor creature, your present servant, well," was the answer, "and I promise not to interfere. His lordship shall grant you a yearly

tenancy from September next." (The tradesman's evil countenance fell.) "And I will pledge myself he will not disturb you, if you do not make the treatment of your servants a scandal to the neighbourhood."

The man stood irresolute, and then muttering, "Good morning, my lady!" went out; and his wife followed him to their chaise, which was drawn by a half-starved horse. But before she went, she said,

"I wish to mention, as it's only right I should, that the girl has breakings out. I was always afraid of my children catching it. But perhaps you've got none."

It may be observed that Mrs. Nixon firmly believed she had, having caught a glimpse of the little girl. The breaking out to which she alluded arose from poverty of blood. The whole family were ill-fed, with the exception of the man himself; but not to the extent of their wretched servant-girls. The wife was drunken, and could neither market properly, nor cook, nor even superintend cooking. Now and then they would have a feast, when waste and extravagance were the order of the day. Generally, they sent to the cook-shop, or would have a boiled ham in the house.

That evening the neighbours of that amiable pair were disturbed by loud and protracted screaming and wailing, first in a small feeble treble, and afterwards in a fuller key and with a louder volume of sound. It was first of all occasioned by Mrs. Nixon beating her new or last servant-of-all-work, a child of fourteen; and then by the lady receiving some chastisement from the British fist of Mr. N. himself, which

ended in violent hysterics on her part. The swearing on both sides was awful, and very edifying to the children. The next day, the new servant was thrust forth into the street, and went with a pitiful tale of hunger to the shop of the nearest baker, a kind-hearted man, who gave her some food; but who dared not interfere in the concerns of the bullying and braggart Nixon. This sort of cowardice is perhaps necessarily extended widely in the present state of the community. Every one fears publicity, an action at law, a police report, and the newspapers. Every one is busy, and has a thousand reasons for not being Quixotic. The struggle for existence makes us all selfish. Imagine any one in a forest, or a desert, finding two little children astray and leaving them there to their own devices. Does such an inhuman monster exist? Yet it is a thing that we cheerfully do in London, and scarcely retain a recollection of the fact. If any one should interfere with two little toddlers of three and four years of age astray down Holborn-hill, it would probably be some old woman bent on stripping them of their clothes, if they were worth stripping, or the police, who might roughly convey them to the station with a very bad grace. A man like Nixon, hated and feared on every side, enjoys a vast amount of impunity, and is much better treated than any worthy or honest man of his rank, whilst he is not so much cheated and makes better bargains. He lets it be known that he has a solicitor, and would bring an action against any one who gave him the slightest opportunity. He would like any one to kick him, or strike him, or call

him a scoundrel. But the reptile would crawl in the mire before a lord.

Scarcely had Mr. and Mrs. Nixon taken their departure, and the little girl of whom we spoke commenced her reading under Mrs. Wilmington's patient tuition, when two gentlemen were announced, the Reverend Mr. Hindle and a friend. Mr. Hindle, an esteemed friend of Mrs. Wilmington, introduced the other, a dignified and venerable man, as the Archdeacon of Filey.

"The archdeacon, my dear lady," said Mr. Hindle, "has been anxious to make your acquaintance ever since the evening when you delivered that truly Christian and impassioned address at the Bermondsey school-room, on the want of sisterly charity in our present state of society. The archdeacon read the report, which was indeed admirably done."

"That reporter was quite accidentally there," said Mrs. Wilmington. "Had I known it, probably I should not have spoken at all."

"Nay, my dear madam," observed Mr. Hindle. "I consider it, and so does the archdeacon I am sure, a most fortunate circumstance, which thus drew out gifts so remarkable, and which I trust may yet be consecrated to the service of Heaven, as your life and fortune have for long been in so eminent a degree."

"I hope, madam, that you will deliver another lecture ere long," said the archdeacon. "I came here to suggest St. James's Hall, and I hope it will be soon; for I leave London about ten days hence, and I shall be greatly disappointed, if I do not hear you.

I am told by my friend here, that he never heard such fervid diction, such thrilling power of appeal to the better feelings of our nature. He says that your whole audience were affected to tears. And all this unstudied and improvised!"

The lady shook her head. "I am sorry, venerable sir, to act contrary to any wish expressed by you; but it is not my intention to appear in this manner in public again."

"What!" cried Mr. Hindle, "you surely cannot refuse. With such gifts, such genius, surely it is absolutely wrong to refuse to consecrate them to the service of Heaven and your fellow-creatures in the manner you have so brilliantly inaugurated."

"I am told," said the archdeacon, "that you have it at your option to do great good by the exercise of your remarkable powers. I will not, however, presume to attempt to influence you, until I have heard your reason for a determination which I must own seems strange and has taken me by surprise, after the extraordinary impression produced by your inaugural attempt."

Mrs. Wilmington sat deeply reflecting for a few moments, during which her countenance expressed varied and successive emotions. There might have been a transient glance of gratified vanity and triumph; if so, it speedily gave place to a strange look of pain, a dark and troubled shade, as if a cloud passed over a laughing and limpid stream, and the chill of autumn evening had suddenly succeeded to the reign of spring. Lastly, a soft and subdued melancholy lent an inexpressible charm to her face,

and melted into a moonlit smile. She was like an ideal effigy of widowhood scattering flowers on a tomb.

"I do not think," she said, "that it is the province of my sex to address public assemblies on social or religious questions. If it be, it is not so in a case like mine. I am speaking wholly apart from my own feelings in the matter, but not from my own reason, and the instinctive monitor within. I feel that it is not right; but I say so apart from any self-sacrifice I might make. You, at least, are fully aware, and I presume that the venerable archdeacon knows something of the nature of my—my—earlier life. Shall I set up my standard as a teacher? Consider already some of the remarks elicited. It is not how they may affect me, but the high and holy object which I trust I have in view. My reparation should be as silent and secret, as my sins and errors have been public. If the truth of my repentance be doubted even by scoffers, do you not think that evil instead of good may result? Venerable sir! I forgot *myself*, when I upbraided Society with its Pharisaical sins and cruel coldness that night. I cannot always forget myself—and others will never forget. What will they say of me? That it is a new line of acting—a new excitement. And if my sincerity is impeached, I become a fashion, a folly, and thus even, ultimately, a disgrace. No; if women take up this great and holy cause in public, which if banded together in a charitable league they can best effect separately and at home, let them at least be those against whom hypocrisy and scandal cannot fling a

stone. The mission of a Magdalen cannot be to instruct those who have never fallen, never been tempted, in their duty either to Heaven or to their fellow-creatures. If I were to lecture in public, the very fashion of my dress would be criticised—if I dressed in the ordinary costume of a lady, I should be blamed, if in the severest or simplest manner, it would be alike cavilled at. If my eloquence were all that the kind good pastor here" (turning to Mr. Hindle) "describes it and more, it would be deemed the success of an actress. In short, I feel that the whole effect would be a mistake, and its most signal triumph only the greater injury to the cause of the suffering sisterhood of shame."

The venerable archdeacon, a man of nearly eighty years of age, rose, and impressively laid his hand upon the speaker's braided hair.

"You are right, my dear child!" he said, "and our judgment is rebuked. I came here," he continued, "entertaining some lingering doubts as to your character and motives. I own it, in spite of the earnest eulogy of my old friend. I shall go away, even at my advanced age, with more elevated and broader views of humanity. You have kindled a spark of enthusiasm in the heart of an aged churchman. I thank you! My curiosity is rebuked. If I feel humbled at the thought of my suspicion and narrow ideas, you have, I repeat, elevated my conception of the innate goodness of the human heart. I thank you much. I have heard of your deeds of charity and good."

At this moment the servant announced "Father

Nelia." A little pleasant-looking man of some sixty summers or thereabouts toddled briskly in, and took both of Mrs. Wilmington's hands between his. "Come va, Signora mia carissima," he said. "Come sta ella? Bene?" and he then looked round and saluted the archdeacon and his friend.

The former, for a moment, had gathered himself up in a species of dignified alarm. He was a staunch, uncompromising Protestant. A slight shade of pain manifested itself on Mrs. Wilmington's face. The archdeacon hesitated, but for an instant. He advanced with frank courtesy and offered his hand to the little man, who held it and raised it instinctively half-way to his lips.

"I have heard of your benevolence and noble qualities, sir," said the archdeacon, "and I am glad of this opportunity of making your acquaintance."

"Here is the benevolence, my dear sir," responded the other, looking towards Mrs. Wilmington. "I do but labour in my—what you call—vocazione, yes. But she is so good. E vero. Si! sei un' angelo! Tacete! I sall tell what you 'ave done for my poor peoples, les Savoyards! Monsignor, I 'ave very poor peoples to see, and she is their ange gardien; she makes de soupes, de potage, de vermicelli, oh! so strong. Ha! ha! De leetel Domenichino, he vill say his prayer no more to de Madonna, bot to you. She is ver veeked, you know, she make herself de idol of my poverini! Si!"

The archdeacon had never met a Roman Catholic clergyman on terms of amity before; and he again felt a slight twinge, a little premonitory flying gout-

like tweak of conscience. An hour ago, if any one had proposed to him to meet Father Nelia, he would have lifted his pastoral stick in anger at the very thought. He was in a new atmosphere, and succumbed to its influence. Before he left, he actually consented to visit the good little priest, and asked him to dinner, luckily not on a Friday, in Eaton-square.

Father Nelia approved highly of Mrs. Wilmington's decision not to appear again in public.

"No, no!" he said, "she sall not 'ave some fools of peoples insult her! It vould not do at all. They vould not onderstand questo cuore magnifico. She is not a cantatrice, not a singer of de teatro, she sing to de poor peoples in bed—she sing in de houses of de abbandonati, de desolati—not de gobe-mouches who sall stare her out of face. De Inglis, perdonatemi, dey vant all de charity in public, in de giornali, till dey 'ave none left for de private use. Dey fancy dat il buon Dio, he read de newspapers, de affiches, vat you call advertisements of de 'Times,' over his chocolate in de morning. Bot it is deeferent, n'est-ce pas, monsignor?"

The archdeacon had never met with religion in so lively a shape before. But he owned that evening that he had learned something even from the eccentricities of the worthy Father Nelia; had turned over a page as yet unread by him in the great folio of universal charity and the religion of the heart.

Amongst other things, Mrs. Wilmington narrated to the two clergymen the behaviour of Mr. and Mrs. Nixon to their niece Mary. She did not say how

nobly she had rescued that poor young creature from despair and suicide. Sometimes this good Samaritan would put on her bonnet and shawl with a thick veil, and go out late in the evening and wander about the streets alone. In the course of her rambles, she would relieve many a suffering wretch. She had a marvellous faculty of distinguishing between real and assumed distress. She seemed familiar with the gestures of despair, and to recognise the moan of desertion and want with the subtle instincts of a Red Indian on the war-path. Only hers was a path of peace. How was this? Our readers do not need to be informed. They already recognise in Mrs. Wilmington her who has already figured so strangely in these pages, the fortunate unfortunate Kitty Dareall, the street pariah, the outcast mother, the protégée of the eccentric young nobleman, the once brilliant actress, the dictatress of the "mode" to the frivolous world of fashion, the reprover of Aubrey, the legatee of the deaf old duke, and the true-hearted woman throughout all. She did not tell the venerable clergymen, who only imagined that her antecedents were those of a modern Lais, and that she spent her large income, with the exception of her bare plain living in Guilford-street, in good deeds—she did not tell them, we say, how she had figuratively held back Mary by the hem of her torn garments from plunging beneath those dark arches, where so many young creatures, formed for love and happiness, have been

> **Glad to death's mystery**
> **Swift to be hurled—**
> **Anywhere! anywhere!**
> **Out of the world.**

She did not say how she had soothed and cherished that forlorn and faded wretch, after indignantly snatching her from the brutal grasp of one of the trained hounds, whom the rich and powerful in this civilised country employ to hunt down misery far more effectively than crime, and who do their work as thoroughly and gleefully in this free land, as any Cuban bloodhound let loose on the track of the sensational fugitive slave. Her well-filled purse had saved her from the otherwise inevitable consequences of this act of female Quixotism. She did not impart all this, or the details of the succour which she afforded to the life-weary, hunted-down girl. But she did mention the conduct of Nixon and his appropriate helpmeet.

"Can it be wondered at," she said, "that the papers are full of complaints of the misconduct and inefficiency of the lower order of domestics, when the human drudge is treated with such brutality? The servant is too often dealt with as out of the pale of humanity by vulgarians, whose meanness, vanity, folly, and wickedness it is impossible for persons of any pretensions to culture, even to imagine. The simple statement of an orphan workhouse girl is sometimes so entirely beyond the credence of those unacquainted with the details of small trading domestic life, that a 'worthy magistrate' refuses to believe her statements. Her story is 'too unlikely;' and the modern Mrs. Brownrigg, if she has stopped short of actual and apparent murder, escapes in triumph."

"I fear," said the archdeacon, "that in many, if not most cases, the mistresses are unable to teach their servants anything beneficial or useful. In my boyish days, my mother repaired to her kitchen regularly after breakfast, and my grandmother's book of receipts in her own handwriting was worth something, I can tell you. Their correspondence about a dinner or supper was as earnest as any in the modern times about the latest fashions of London or Paris. Then, economy was practicable—it is not so now. A lady has no knowledge wherewith to contend against a professed cook. In those days, waste could be in great measure checked. Now it is one of the scandals of the day."

"True," said Mr. Hindle. "I am certain that there is sufficient food actually destroyed in the houses of the great and wealthy to furnish all the poor in England. It is to me a terrible and awful reflection. Both around our large towns and in country residences, the destruction of fruit and vegetables is enormous. There is enough allowed to rot in the luxurious gardens of the rich to supply the army of Xerxes all the year round. Imagine a selfish, invalid couple with three or four acres of garden-ground, tasting a strawberry or two during the season, as Brummel once ate a pea; and this surrounded by a mining, brickmaking, or nailing district. Do these people ever think of distributing their superfluous blessings? Do they ever make a crowd of poor schoolboys or schoolgirls happy?"

"Very seldom, I fear," said Mrs. Wilmington.

"They would tell you, if they condescended to consider such a thing at all, that it would lead to idleness and thieving."

"I remember," said Father Nelia, "dat I once asked a padrone of a great hotel of de most successful, vere dere finds itself every night a crowd enormous to eat de bifteck and de choppe con patate, you know—I did ask him vat he do vid all de débris. He said it vent ai porconi, to de peegs. I say vat for you not give it ai poveri, to de poor? 'Not so green, not such sciocco,' he say. 'I vould 'ave a crowd at my door.' 'E perchè no?' I say. 'Den my servants vould rob me,' he reply; as if dey do not rob him now."

"There is no country," said the archdeacon, "where there is such waste in everything as in England—waste in food, in material, in labour, in treasure, in ships, in horses, in men and women, in children, alas! in human life. Nay, we waste our coal, our manure; we enrich the sea with the vital essences of reproduction, and get in return the cholera and abundance of white-bait. Lastly, we waste intellect, invention, genius, prestige, all the gifts which Heaven has endowed us with as a nation, and too often our immortal part, in the lust and struggle for gain."

"Many of these things," observed Mrs. Wilmington, "are far beyond my province to understand; but reasoning from what I do know, I believe that you are right in all. With the various troubles of my own sex I have chiefly to deal, and when I find their state so appalling as it too frequently is, I can

easily imagine that there is something very wrong with the whole community. I do not believe that woman is so degraded, in any barbarous country, as she is even in her virtuous state in the mining and manufacturing districts of England—I mean by that, her state of wife and mother. One has only to listen to the language of holiday folk in these districts, to recognise the depravation of all. Now and then a fine nature crops up. There is plenty of reckless courage among the men, and of animal fondness among the women. Nature is not yet stamped out from among them. But, oh! the story of the towns! The cry that goes up to Heaven from Birmingham and Manchester, that curdles with horror the affrighted sky! Can we wonder that even Mormonism possesses charms in the eyes of creatures whose souls and bodies are alike starved?"

"Alas!" said the archdeacon, "what can any one do to stem the tide of profligacy, of ruin, and of wrong? Preaching is vain; example profitless, did it exist; repression the mocking task of the Fiend."

"Example," said Mrs. Wilmington, "without sympathy, is, I own, of little aid. But if the daughters of affluence would combine, not only to succour, but prevent; if they would approach the lost and fallen with tenderness, and reserve their scorn and fiercest reprobation for the seducer, the profligate, the cruel libertine, the systematic debauchee, *then*, there might be some hope of improvement."

"That is it," said Mr. Hindle; "that is precisely what I was so anxious you should teach with the ex-

traordinary gift of eloquence, which Providence has bestowed on you for good."

Mrs. Wilmington shook her head. "Let me labour after my own fashion," she said, "and let those lead the crusade who are born to such high emprise. I aspire to be but an unknown pioneer in the great Amazonian army marching to the emancipation of the enthralled sisterhood of frailty, necessity, and shame; that sisterhood whose shrill wail rises nightly amid the gleam of white arms and spectral faces, and the drift of dishevelled hair, from the crime-stained cities, and polluted villages of this want-smitten and wealth-ridden land. Let the triumphant march of that army pass over my unseen grave, and its angelic shout of victory will thrill through me, as it does now; thrill through my forgotten dust, were I 'earth in an earthy bed.'"

As she spoke, her features seemed to stiffen into marble, and the colour of her eyes deepened, and her mass of light-brown hair, which had accidentally been shaken somewhat loose from its simple tie, gave the slightest possible suggestion of a halo and a glory round her small head and expressive face. As she spoke, she had risen impulsively, and as she uttered the last words of the speech which we have endeavoured so imperfectly to record, the sunbeams poured a full flood of light through a breaking cloud and streamed through the heavy-curtained window of that dusky and gloomy room, illuminating her form like that of a saint pictured on the stained glass in some cathedral nave. Her three visitors rose simultaneously and in silence. The archdeacon

looked on in surprise. At this moment a street organ of peculiar sweetness of tone was played a little way off.

"The music of the poor!" she said. "Even that they would cut off and take away. I have danced to that very tune, when a very small sickly child, along with a crowd of other children in a blind alley on a cool summer night. There was a blue narrow strip of sky above us and one star of pale gold, which I said was mine. Every little dirty outcast there claimed it too, I remember. It was all that we knew of Heaven. The music was our only boon on earth. The swarthy foreigner smiled on us. Perhaps he thought of other children in his own distant land. He loved us better, than did all the hard task-masters, the prosperous, smiling lords and ladies of our native country. Why do they not roof out even God's sky from the children of the poor? It encourages them to think themselves better than their fate, equal in the sight of Heaven, as they will be hereafter; but not now. Why should the tones of an instrument played by foreign hands teach their ears an acuter perception of the harshness of the accents of their more prosperous fellow-citizens at home? At home, where? In the gaol, the hospital, the workhouse, and the grave? Away with the music of the poor! Silence it! Banish it! Lock it up! Put it down with the harsh grating voice of the machinery of 'Order' and the 'Law!' It is better not to awaken thought, or hope, or love. In France an empress visits the lowest of the lost—braves contact with physical and moral contagion,

and survives, protected by the wings of invisible angels, to press her child, startled by the thunder of a nation's applause, closer in joy and queen-like confidence, to her breast. The ladies of England copy the fashion of her skirt; nay, the very colour of her hair. Can they not make charity a 'fashion;' sympathy a new pattern of the heart? Send us, oh great and merciful Providence! a revolution of soul, ere a revolution of blood and flame be reflected in the clouds of wrath gathering over our heads. I know the bitterness of the strong mechanic's weary heart, the evil passions of the gaunt and wolfish throng, the felon populace of injustice and wrong, of ignorance and neglect. If ever that storm break over England, there will be no mercy shown to those who have held themselves aloof, and the innocent will perish with the guilty, and perish *first*. And oh! the women that will be avenged! I see the living ghosts of man's perjury and profligacy turned into ghouls and shrieking 'Death! death!' to those who have made them suffer, and those who have looked calmly and complacently on their sufferings. I see them roaming maddened over the broad pavements worn by the footsteps of the hundreds and thousands of their sex, who have died a living death during a century of woe, and their lips and arms drip with blood! There has been blood drunk from the gutters of scaffolds ere now. What can they expect who destroy and unsex?" She clasped her hands over her head, and sank back exhausted on the sofa from which she had risen. At this moment the little girl entered the

door, and ran up to her benefactress, whose hand she clasped.

"Oh, my dear lady! my dear lady!" she cried.

Father Nelia made a sign to the others to withdraw; but before retiring with them, he rang the bell, and gave a few brief instructions to Mary. The three clergymen of different persuasions, and more than different ceremonial forms—for Mr. Hindle was a Unitarian minister of considerable fame—paused to exchange a few words in the street. The archdeacon owned himself deeply affected and impressed.

"Is she thus excited often?" he said.

"Very rarely," replied Mr. Hindle; "I have never witnessed her so much moved before."

"I have, once," said Father Nelia. "It is one great good reason why it cannot be that she give public letture, lecture what you call."

"Nor," said Mr. Hindle, "is the British public at all prepared for such denunciations. I believe in the truth of nearly all that she says. But she would not be understood, and her denunciations and exhortations would do more harm than good. Cassandra could not save Troy, nor Solomon Eagle avert the Plague."

"Her benevolent ministrations are, I believe, unexampled?" said the archdeacon in a tone of inquiry.

"She has an income of three thousands pounds a year; and I speak within the mark," replied Mr. Hindle, "when I say that nine-tenths of it are spent in the rescue of unfortunate women, and in charitable deeds of every kind. And all this is done without

the slightest ostentation, and involves her constant personal attention and care."

"I have been told," said the archdeacon, "the source whence she derived her wealth. That is a matter greatly to be regretted; but it is well that she makes such a use of it."

"Let me assure you of one thing," rejoined Mr. Hindle, "with which it is right you should be acquainted. That her antecedents are stainless is unhappily far from being the case. This, you must have gathered from her own admissions and speech. But in the case to which you have referred, that is, the extraordinary legacy of the dissipated old nobleman who placed at her disposal the money of which she makes such pious use, I know for a certainty, and can pledge my word, that whatever may be thought or alleged to the contrary by the world, the bequest was as pure and sacred as it could be, coming from such a source. The late Duke of Chalkstoneville made her acquaintance when she was on the stage, and when he was at a very advanced period of life. He conceived a singular regard for her, and took great pleasure in her company and conversation. In fact, latterly, he could not bear her to be away from his side. The commencement of the acquaintance was probably of the nature of an ordinary one made by a man of his stamp. But about that time, she herself, from some cause or other, completely, and as I have learnt from her, for the second time in her life, altered her mode of existence and conduct. The first time, she told me, it was from feeling; the second from conviction. The duke be-

came very ill and feeble; and she exercised over his latter days a most wonderful and purifying effect. He died a thoroughly repentant man. Before dying, he would have married her, in defiance of all obstacles, in order to leave her his vast personal property, but this she firmly and very properly refused. As you are aware, he left large sums to charities entirely through her. She might have had all the money over which he had control, had she been so inclined."

"It is a very remarkable tale," said the archdeacon; "and had I not witnessed her enthusiasm and eloquence in addition to being acquainted with some of her good actions, I might have entertained the belief that you had been deceived. There is reason then to imagine that her intimacy with the late duke was of a purely Platonic character?"

"I am convinced of it," was Mr. Hindle's reply.

"Anch' io," said the father, "I am as sure as if I had heard it under the sacred seal of confession itself."

The archdeacon involuntarily started. In what company did he find himself? A priest of the Church of Rome actually talking of the confessional. Father Nelia saw what was passing in his mind.

"Scusatemi, monsignor!" he said; "if you vish to forget dat you have by accident made de acquaintance of a poor priest of a different faith, he vill not seek to intrude upon you—perhaps it vill be for de best. He vill remember you in his prayers, and hope to meet you in anoder vorld, and vere, perhaps, it shall be found as de best religion is

dat vich is de best administered in deeds of charity and love."

"Now Heaven forbid!" said the archdeacon, "that I should show the spirit of a narrow sectarian. Come and see me often, father, I beg; and that you may come often, come soon, remembering what an old man I am."

Little Father Nelia shook the hand of the tall and venerable ecclesiastic with much warmth. Certainly the spirit of that charity, without which all other professed religion is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, was present that day among those three men. They parted greatly satisfied with each other, and pondering over what they had heard and seen.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE PARK WHICH IS NOT THE PEOPLE S.

Hyde Park, in relation to the people, reminds me of a child's toy, with which his paternal government does not allow him to play, because it is too good for him—a huge frosted plum-cake bestowed on him by his grandfather, which his pastors and masters daily devour, and of which he is lucky to get a crumb on Sundays. After all, the good-natured, busy mechanic has surrendered the Park to his "betters" so long, with perfect good humour and acquiescence, that it has passed out of his possession by custom. Only when he does want it a little, just a little now and then, to flourish the inalienable right of a free Briton to speechify, when he feels aggrieved, it seems alike harsh and impolitic, not to say ungracious and ungrateful, to question a privilege which is only dangerous when opposed. There is no more harm likely to be done to the flower-beds in the Park by a Reform meeting under the permission and with the assistance of the Government, than by a Volunteer review or illuminations for peace. Do not the remnants of aged trees invite stump oratory? When the safety and prosperity of the great State steam-ship is best insured by a moderate and dignified rate of progression, it does seem absurd for the officers to sit weeping on the safety-valve, whilst heaping on the unnecessary fuel of a nation's wrath. —*Notes on Passing Events.*

"It's a fine thing to be a wine-merchant," observed Mr. Stingray, as a gentleman gorgeously got-up drove a splendidly appointed curricle past the sage and a friend, who were both lounging near the corner of Rotten Row, by Apsley House, in the Park. To look at him, any one would have thought him a duke or marquis at least—at least any one who hap-

pened to be ignorant of modern life. "That pair of horses," said Stingray, "cost at least five hundred guineas. And the mischief of it is, there is nothing wrong or snobbish in the turn-out. Perhaps the neatest thing now-a-days in the whole lot of equipages out, is the property of a quack surgeon. Such a man formerly would have had a pair of piebald horses from Astley's, and a carriage of the gaudiest description, which he would have used as part of his stock-in-trade. No such thing now. The said quack drops the shop, I can tell you, when he comes out. He is as good-looking a fellow as was ever *abonné* at Truefitt's. There's no keeping money out, I can tell you. And if you meet the elegant Noses, youthful scion of the boot and shoe establishment of that name, ten to one he will insinuate that he comes of the Noseses of Devonshire, an old Spanish family settled in England at the time of the Armada. When your friend Wilkins, who himself gave up shop-keeping for the militia, introduces Noses, he whispers, 'Don't be afraid that there is any connexion with the Houndsditch folk. He is of the De Noses, or rather Nosez (you know how names are altered in the course of centuries), very talented fellow, I assure you—is likely to be in the ministry, great favourite of Pam!' As if he cared, or you cared, or any one cared, so that Noses has the talents of gold, ha! ha! and the shekels of silver; but we Britishers like to seem to care about such things."

"You don't shoot, I think," said Stingray's friend, in whose ears the sage might have been thought to have been distilling poison, seeing that he was an

aristocratic parvenu of the latest type. No such danger, since it was the pleasure of the gentleman in question to affect the airs of a noble of the *sangre azul*, utterly forgetting that in reality that his uncle, who laid the foundations of the fortunes of the entire family, was a City alderman and linendraper, and had once been an errand-boy.

"Do I shoot?" said Stingray. "What! assist at the 'partridge-hunt,' like a mossoo, do you mean; bring down the 'long tails' and all that, and slaughter the bunny rabbit and the hare? My dear fellow, I'm thankful to say that I never fired off a gun in my life. But make a note, if you are given to that benignant sport, that I like game. Put it down in your note-book for September and October, and may 'le sport' be kind, according as you act on the remembrance."

"Well, last year," said his friend, "I accepted an invitation for two days to accompany a friend of mine, a City man, a very warm swell, to shoot at Mokeham Spinneys for a couple of days, and stay at Lord de Mokeham's house. I hadn't an idea of the arrangement before I went down—didn't know but that De Mokeham would be there himself. So I put myself in the train and down I went. I got a dog-cart at the station and joined the party at the Spinneys, who were popping away in the most approved style. A gentlemanly-looking old fellow, togged in a grey-shooting suit, said to me as I entered a ride in the wood, 'Mr. Welby's friend, I suppose?' I bowed. 'Will you stand there?' he continued, 'they are beating down this way.' I at once acquiesced. 'Who

can the old fellow be?' thought I. 'Shouldn't wonder if it is De Mokeham—*must* be De Mokeham; wish I had called him "my lord."' At that moment the fun began. Down came the beaters, out flew the pheasants; very pretty sport, I can tell you. There were ten guns, including myself, and we bagged nearly two hundred brace, all cocks, with a few muffish exceptions, that day, and a hundred and three hares, besides four couple and a half of woodcocks, and five brace of birds. But you're not attending."

"My dear fellow," said Stingray, "one reads that sort of thing of all manner of shooting snobs any day in the season in the newspapers. I never care to count game, except from a basket, carriage-paid."

"Wait a bit," said the other. "After we had polished off that lot, Welby found me out. He came up with the old fellow in light grey. 'How are you?' he said. 'Allow me to introduce my friend Baggs. Baggs, Frodsham, Frodsham, Baggs!' and so on. 'Then it is not De Mokeham?' I said to Welby, as soon as I had an opportunity. 'De Mokeham, no! whatever put that into your head?' asked Welby. 'Isn't his lordship here?' I inquired. 'Not he, poor devil. 'Don't he wish he could be?' 'Where is he?' said I. 'Where is he? That's what a good many would like to know. Anywhere from Boulogne to Stockholm, or Queensland, for all I can tell,' replied Welby. 'I should think Queensland a very likely spot?' 'And who's Baggs?' said I. 'What! don't you know Baggs's patent goloshes?' 'To be sure,' I replied, 'had a pair last winter; got 'em now.'

'Well, he's the sole patentee. Inventor cut his throat in Whitecross-street; parted with it for a mere song.' Up sauntered a very dashing fellow just as he said this, and I was introduced to him. He had just come over from Norway in his schooner yacht, I found. He turned out to be Beddowes of the celebrated upholstery firm of Beddowes and Bolster in Bond-street. 'Thorough sportsman,' said Welby. 'No man living, not even Francis Francis, can tie a fly better; and he shot ties with Lord Nobblehall at the last Hurlingham sweep-stakes.' The next was a youthful swell in a black velvet suit and knicker-bockers, who looked like a Spanish noble, and only wanted a guitar instead of a gun, and a cloak thrown negligently over his shoulder, as he leant gracefully against a gate-post at the end of a ride. He turned out to be Foulard, of the great Regent-street house, Foulard and Twichet. To cut it short, there was Binks of Binks's British Marble Emporium, and young Armlet, of Armlet and Longstick, the jewellers in Piccadilly, and, in fact, when we entered a marquee where a first-rate collation was served up, there was only one of the party left whose firm I did not know. 'I'll bet I guess who he is," I whispered to Welby. 'He's either Mortnum or Fason for a fiver.' But he turned out to be a neighbouring squire come over for the day. You've no idea how these fellows did the thing. They had a drag at Mokeham Hall, which they rented together with the shooting, and paid two thousand pounds a-year among the lot. Two hundred pounds each. I couldn't help thinking of the poor, proud nobleman, a wanderer and exile,

whilst his roof-tree rang to the shouts and jokes of these West-end tradesmen. Mais, que voulez vous? They're the boys for the moors, and the salmon-fisheries, and the deer-stalking, now-a-days. The Prince of Wales, I'm told, has been to one of Foulard's smoking symposia."

"Look there!" cried Stingray. "Do you know that lady in a white alpaca trimmed with blue, with that heavy lace fall? I mean in the britzska there, with that beautiful young girl? Who do you think that is, my boy?"

"Can't say—is it the new Lady Fitzpavin or Madame Turquoise, who has just arrived from Paris? She is handsome enough for either, as far as I can see for her veil."

"How do?" said Stingray, to a gentlemanly young fellow, who passed him rapidly by, and who returned his salutation politely, but carelessly enough. "That's Edgar Leslie of the 'Morning Gun,' one of the new sensational school of leader-writers, and war-correspondent — you know what a fuss they made about his letters—couldn't see much in them myself."

"But the ladies?" inquired his companion.

"Oh! to be sure. Well, the tall one in the veil is the celebrated Signora Bianca Stellini, who is to astonish and enrapture us all to-morrow night at Her Majesty's—the great singer of European fame. I declare they have stopped and are talking to young Leslie, fortunate dog."

"But who is the younger lady?" pursued the other.

"Oh! nobody of course. A companion or sheep-dog, you know. Not a very distinguished rôle to play. These great singers are as full of megrims and fancies as—good Heavens! what a shame to let such people into the Park!" And Mr. Stingray pointed to a gaunt and cadaverous, ill-clad looking man, with shaggy beard and hair, who raised himself from the turf, where he had been sleeping, and who looked in a dazed and stupid manner around. "What are the confounded police about?"

It must be mentioned that Mr. Stingray and his friend had been slowly making their way along the drive towards the Serpentine. Arthur Aubrey—for it was he—had slept there since early morning. Appalled at discovering himself thus environed by the fashionable world, and utterly oblivious that no one could possibly recognise him then, the unhappy man looked around in vain for the chance of making his exit. In doing so, he recognised the to him obnoxious form of Stingray. That gentleman saw an opportunity of making a little capital in his way. A short distance off, approaching him on foot, he saw the Bishop of Middlesex and his lady walking with the gravity due to their respective positions in Society and the Church. So he felt in his pocket for some halfpence, and approached the recumbent beggar as he deemed him to be. "Here, my good friend!" he said, in the most benignant tones he could assume, "take this, and the sooner you get out of the Park, the better it will be for you." Suiting the action to the words, he offered the semi-recumbent Aubrey twopence-halfpenny. That

wretched being, scarcely awake, and wholly unconcious that Stingray had not the slightest idea of his identity, took it for a wanton and malignant insult, and leaping up with a cry like a wild beast, dashed his fist right in the face of the astonished alms-giver, felling him fairly to the ground. Then looking round him, and seeing the faces of the fashionable crowd turned upon him with an unendurable stare, he stood a moment or two, as if expecting Stingray to rise, a movement which that individual had not the slightest idea of exercising without assistance, and then swiftly rushed from the spot. No one around sought to arrest his flight. As, however, he crossed the carriage drive, he failed to clear the horses in the Signora's carriage, and came in contact with the fore-quarters of one of them, which reared up, and as he fell, narrowly missed trampling him under foot.

"Poor fellow!" cried the lady, rising, "what can it mean?"

In an instant Aubrey had risen, and was speeding away in the direction of the Marble Arch. Then arose shouts and cries of "Stop thief! Stop him! Knock him down! He's killed a man! Stop the garotter! Hi!" Aubrey would have distanced every one behind him, but his path was crossed. Half a dozen policemen were running at the rate of cabs engaged by the hour. Three or four flamingo-like Life-Guardsmen joined in the pursuit.

"It's no use, if he wos Deerfut himself," cried a pale man in dust-coloured garments, who rose also from a recumbent position, in a carefully selected spot where he had been taking a siesta, but not ap-

parently after a full meal. "Mind vere yer agoin' to, Bobby."

The policeman whom he addressed ran slowly on, after aiming a deliberate kick at the speaker's head, who, however, baulked his charitable intention by rolling out of the way.

"Don't run so fast; you'll hurt yourself, arter that last lot o' cold meat," shouted the Downy; for he it certainly was. And rising up and giving a rapid glance around, he suddenly hurled a large stone which happened to be near at the policeman's head, in return for the compliment, which laid that guardian of public order at length upon the field. The Downy, amazed at the success of his missile, immediately made tracks for the nearest clump of trees. "I didn't think it would 'ave 'it him," he said, "but it ain't his fault them regulation boots of hisn didn't split my 'ead."

Strange what a difference exists in the public estimate of actions. Had the policeman kicked the Downy to death, it would have been hushed up without creating the slightest indignation or interest. The sufferer would have been dragged off to a cell, and in the morning there would have been a great difficulty in ascertaining how he came by his wound. Seven policemen at least would have sworn that he was drunk and incapable; but that they saw no marks or blood when he was locked up. Had the policeman died, in all probability our estimable friend, if caught, would have swung for it in front of the Old Bailey, and been painted as a ruffian of the most diabolical type.

It would have been nothing but an ebullition of

zealous duty for the policeman to stave in the Downy's skull, as he reclined in the "people's park," but for the Downy to "heave 'arf a brick;" at him in return for his intended compliment, that was a horse of a different colour indeed.

To return to the flying Aubrey. He had already been twice headed by volunteer foes, and his escape appeared hopeless, when an accidental circumstance occurred to baffle his pursuers. During his second "double," Aubrey perceived a crowd gathered round some one mounted on a seat, who appeared to be talking and gesticulating with great fervour. Instinctively he made for the throng, which, dense enough in the middle, had many stragglers around. Suddenly as he neared them a cry of "Hurroo! down with the inimies of the Pope!" was uttered by a number of fellows armed with bludgeons, who commenced knocking down indiscriminately every decently dressed personage within their reach. Stones and brickbats produced from sacks and the pockets of the aggressive party were aimed at the crowd. It was a Garibaldian eulogist and his hearers, attacked by the partisans of the Papacy! For a moment Aubrey was succoured, that, is, he escaped the attention of his own pursuers. But an Irishman born in the Seven Dials, seeing him without a hat, brought his shillelah down with admirable accuracy of aim on his unprotected head, and felled him insensible to the ground. In the mean time the Downy had climbed a tree, whence he surveyed the terrors and humours of the fight. A strong body of the police appeared on the scene and showed great activity in capturing several spectators

and persons accidentally there. The unprepared Garibaldians were getting the worst of it, when a party of about twenty Life-Guardsmen joined their side. The build and size of these men seemed to awe the diminutive Patlanders of St. Giles's. The soldiers overtook them with huge strides, aud in many cases snatched their weapons from their hands and soundly thrashed them therewith. When the original disturbers of the peace were thoroughly beaten, the police, who had in the mean time mustered in considerable numbers, made a savage onslaught on the victors, who having merely fought, with the exception of the soldiers, in self-defence, were by no means prepared to continue the contest, and became easy victims to "order." The police, in fact, chiefly befriended and avenged the heroes of St. Giles's, in consequence whereof the magistrate, before whom the captured and wounded were dragged, took a wholly pro-Papist and anti-Garibaldian view of the matter, and lectured, fined, and imprisoned several respectable men who had nothing to do with the matter, save getting their heads broken by a gang of the lowest desperadoes in London, impelled by the brutish fanaticism of ignorance to make the attack. Among the prisoners was Aubrey, who was carried on a stretcher from the field to the hospital. As for police constable 94 Z, the Goliath who had fallen a victim to the escaped Downy, he was especially complimented for his courage, determination, and zeal "in suppressing that which might otherwise have been a serious *émeute*." At least several of the papers said so, and we suppose that it was true.

The misadventure of Mr. Stingray caused a great sensation among those of the fashionable throng who were made aware of it. "Fortunately," as the papers said, the carriage of the Bishop of Middlesex was close at hand, and into it Mr. Stingray was induced to get, to consider at leisure, whilst he was driven home, whether he had not purchased the honour rather dearly, and to ponder on the best remedy for a pair of black eyes. The paragraphs headed "Mysterious outrage in the Park," afforded next day some solace to his philosophic mind, between the paroxysms of vicious swearing in which he indulged, and which would have done honour to the godly little town of Jedburgh writhing in drouthy indignation under the Forbes Mackenzie Act. It was edifying to us behind the curtain to read the comments to which this occurrence gave birth.

"We regret to state, that the atrocious perpetrator of the dastardly outrage upon the benevolent and gifted writer, Mr. Stingray, is not yet in the hands of justice. A clue, however, is stated to have been obtained by one of the most active and intelligent officers of our detective force, Superintendent Fluker of the X Division."

The Park got fuller and fuller, and then emptier and emptier. Sallow Cabinet Ministers had cantered past sallower judges mounted on stout cobs. Loobies on hired hacks took out their half-guinea's worth, to the disgust of their noble steeds. Gentlemen with tawny moustaches, and moustaches that were not tawny, occasionally hid their heads by plunging them inside various broughams, each with one fair

spirit for its occupant. Chawles, the predestined of matrimony, had drawled out his last adieu to sweet Maria, and turned his horse's head on devotion and "twenty thou. down, sir, on the nail, by Jove!" The fat old couple in a barouche had finished their inevitable drive by the Serpentine—he with bushy grey whiskers, and she with a poodle, who appeared to have won the blue ribbon of wheezing fatness. So had the thin old pair shut up in their gloomy landau—he a lean and careworn invalid; she sour and ascetic, and with no poodle or pet.

Lais, with yellow chignon, had driven her pair of stepping bays home an hour ago. Rhodope, with dark ambrosial curls, followed by cockaded groom, with tongue thrust in his cheek and a leer in his gin-and-watery eye, had taken her last canter down Rotten Row. Little Captain Cockerill, horse-dealer and adjutant of Volunteers, had shown off his latest ten-pound purchase with three white hocks and a spavin, let us hope in vain; the hum of expectant bathers rose in the misty air, ready to plunge in with fleshy steam of unpleasant little bodies, so soon as the clock should strike eight; a few soldiers were busy lazily rowing the component parts of a pontoon to and fro across the watery expanse, and tiny sails neared the shore, to be hooked in by their owners for the last time that night; big Newfoundlands and yelping curs shook themselves over the muslin dresses of young and middle-aged ladies apparently devoted to religious promenades with certain puritans of the Household Brigade; Mr. Weevil, solicitor's clerk, who did not ride, seated himself by the nearest

and therefore most eligible veiled vestal and switched the dust off his boots with his whip; the crowd of those who had not dined, and who meant to dine, had merged into the smoky unseen—those who had most and best dinners with least and worst appetites, and *vice versâ*, as the case might be. In fact, the Park had become empty of nearly all, save cads, and the females of their species, and the usual amount of mere passers through, when a figure might have been perceived dropping carefully from one of the wide-spread lower branches of a chesnut-tree. That individual took what might have been, but was not, a meteorological observation, east, west, north and south; and then commencing to whistle at the top of his powers, which were great, struck into a path which led to the nearest exit amid the greatest number of pedestrians from the Park. Joining a throng of ragamuffins outside, he listened eagerly to a discussion on the skirmish which had just taken place.

"I tell yer," said one fellow to another, "there's three on 'em has got their gruel, and the surgeon has guv 'em up for dead."

"Three!" muttered the unrepentant Downy; "he wos big enough for three. It's a dispinsashun of Prowidence that he didn't kick my nob hoff. But I hope he ain't much hurt, for all that. At any rate, he's paid for it, and they pensions the vidders of the Force. They vouldn't have pensioned my vidder, if he'd knocked the breath out of my carkis."

We are happy to be able to record that the injured man was well enough to make the most of his broken

head, which went down to the general account, i.e., the account of Garibaldi and his sympathisers. Whatever may be the mysterious reason, it is certain that it is grossly intolerant to resist a Papist zealot who endeavours to break your head. It is gross indecency to translate or even allude to some Papistical works used in the colleges which are endowed by the money of a Protestant (?) State. It is an outrage to object to nunneries, which have increased tenfold in this country within the last few years. Everything is an outrage on one side, and nothing on the other. This may be compromise—it looks like something worse. We are not alluding to religious tenets, but to the temporal, social, and political bearings of that aggression which threatens England with internal convulsions and civil war again.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### TOPS IS LET INTO THE SECRET.

Can I keep a secret? Only try me. Tell me what it is, and I'll advertise it in the "——." And if it is ever heard of again, when once there, I'll engage to read through the entire journal. I met the proprietor the other day. "Hallo!" said I, "you ought to be obliged to me." "What for?" he said. "Why," I answered, "I've just doubled your circulation." "How do you mean?" he asked quite briskly. "Why," said I, "I bought a copy this week, and I've just torn it in two to wrap up a brace of parcels." Would you believe it, the ungrateful humbug hailed an omnibus immediately and never gave me an order for a theatre again?

"WASN'T it a rum start, Susan?" observed Mr. Tops to that young lady, who had duly arrived and exchanged new vows with her constant adorer. "You see, in course, I might have picked up fifty letters, and never so much as thought of looking at one. This 'ere——"

"Don't say this 'ere—say this letter," interrupted Susan.

"Well, this 'ere letter," continued Tops, with admirable simplicity.

"This letter," cried Susan.

"Well, I said this letter 'ere," rejoined Tops; "I was agoing to say, it was stuck behind one of the

cushions of the 'mourning-coach,' as I call it. I was going to take it in to the old chap, and had put it in the harness room winder, until I had finished up, when jest as I was giving the curbs a touch of the dry leather, my eye fell quite permiscuous on the name of Arthur Aubrey, Eskvire. 'By your leave,' says I. So I made bold to read it, and a precious sight of villainy I should say I found out."

"Nothing could have justified such an act, James," said the object of his affections, "but the circumstances of the case."

"So I've said a dozen times. After all said and done, there was no seal broke, you know; and I never meant so much as looking at it, considering, of course, as I knowed to whom it belonged——"

"You 'knew,' you meant," said Susan.

"Yes, I meaned I knew," said Tops.

We shall not in future follow Susan's corrections of her admirer's language. Suffice it to say, that she did occasionally set him right.

The pair were sitting in the boudoir, kitchen, and ironing-room of Susan's future mother-in-law, Mrs. Tops, than whom a more kindly, illiterate, and vulgar, high-minded woman, there exists not in London at this moment. The magnificence of that poor old creature's soul was something astonishing. Sometimes she said that she, Martha Tops, would like to be Queen of England, in order to show foreign guests, especial royal and imperial "Hemperors, and sech like," the glorious hospitality of John Bull. "There was rubbish enough which she needn't name, she hoped she knew her dooty better, entertained princely

here, and why send kings and queens as was our guests to a hinn?" Some one had told this innocent old lady the wonderful story of the groom-minister of Bavaria, and she was never tired of imagining a similar career for Tops. Add to this, that she had a great respect and regard for Susan, mingled with some awe in regard to that young person's superior attainments, and we have said all that is necessary of Mrs. Tops, who, on this occasion, had devised an errand, in some vague connexion with, or oblique relation to, certain imaginary mangling, and had in reality gone to have a little weak gin-and-water, and a gossip at her own particular bar.

"It's pretty nigh the time," said Tops, consulting the silver warming-pan which had survived his uncle in a double sense. "He's very punctual is the Downy."

"Why do you think," asked Susan, "that there is no possibility of its being Mr. Aubrey whom the Downy has seen? I should think he's too sharp to be easily mistaken."

Tops shook his head.

"I wish," he replied, "that I could believe it. But, lor bless the girl! he was too proud to live, when down on his luck like that, at least for long. I'm sadly afraid it's all up with him long ago. I don't much believe that he survived much after the time I went to live with old Grinderby. I mean when he gave me the slip so sudden. I'd give the favourite for next year's Derby, if he was mine, to know if the governor's alive or not, and what wouldn't we give to find him?"

"You'd say so, James, if you knew all," said Susan, in a slow and earnest manner, looking full in her admirer's eyes.

"If I knew all?" inquired Tops. "I know a precious sight too much, I think; more than I like to know, any ways. What do you mean by knowing all, old woman?"

"Tops," said Susan, "we are going to be married."

Tops bowed his assent.

"A wife ought to have no secrets from her husband."

"Certainly not," said Tops, looking puzzled.

"You have proved your fidelity thoroughly," said Susan, "and I would trust you with anything. Besides, I have the permission of my mistress to tell you."

"Your missus?" cried Tops. "What, that furren lady—the Seenora, as you call her?"

"Have you noticed her particularly?" inquired Susan.

"Well, I can't say I have," replied Tops. "She wears such a thick veil, as if she was afraid of the flies, like a skittish 'oss of a hot summer's day. She looks like an out-and-out fine woman; I will say that for her."

"Don't you think she is like any one you know?" resumed Susan.

"Well, I ain't took particular notice of any of her countrywomen; but I heard a gent as was at the Hopera say she was very like a party of the name of Molly Bran. I shouldn't have remembered it, but

for the bran. I was jest thinking about giving our oldest 'oss a mash, you see. There is a difference even in *their* ages."

"Silly fellow!" quoth Susan, "I mean some one whom you knew well."

Tops shook his head again.

"Isn't she like our old mistress—Mrs. Aubrey?" cried Susan.

"Well," answered Tops, "she may be about the same height and colour; but I should say the Seenora is a matter of two stone heavier than that poor dear lady as is gone. What a light weight she was for a real genteel thorough-bred! I think I see her on her white Arab, afore she lost her eyesight, poor thing! I see the very mare last Wednesday was a week in the Park. She was bought by a lieyer feller with buck-teeth like a rat, a friend of hisn, Grinderby's, I mean." And he pronounced the name with infinite disgust.

"Listen!" said Susan. "Suppose that Mrs. Aubrey had been saved, and not drowned at all, and what is more, had recovered her eyesight, and become one of the most celebrated singers in the world! Suppose that she and the Signora Stellini are one and the same person after all!"

"What!" shouted Tops. "What! you don't, you can't go for to mean it! Don't stand looking at a feller like that! Is she? What? Eh! No, it ain't possible. Do you mean that it is her, and the t'other ain't drownded and dead after all?"

As he stood with open mouth and eyes awaiting an answer, Susan could not help laughing outright.

"Susan!" continued Tops, "you're the girl of my 'art, which I have shown it pretty plain. But if you try and come over me with any chaff about him and her, as I don't like to think of, much less name, in a permiscuous manner, I shall jib and no mistake! I tell you I shan't have it, even from you."

"Mr. Tops," said the lady, "I make every excuse for you; because you can't help being a man, and stupid as all men are. Do you think, sir, I am likely to jest on such a subject? Did it never occur to your dull comprehension that there was anything odd in my going off with a foreign lady in such a hurry, just after such a terrible affair?"

"I thought you did it for the best," replied Tops. "I wasn't going to be mean and suspicious of you—was I? What do you take me for?"

Susan felt rebuked in this simple assertion of confidence.

"My dear, dear James," she said, flinging her arms round his neck and kissing him, while she burst into tears. "You behaved like a—what are you men so fond of calling it?—a brick. There! Mrs. Aubrey was never drowned. She was saved by a brave and honest man, after she had thrown herself into the Thames. She changed her name, and went studying abroad, and I went with her. She is now the celebrated singer Bianca Stellini, about whom such a fuss is made. And she loves her husband still, as dearly as ever. She has never said it, but I know it. And, oh! if we could only find him, they may both be happy yet."

Poor Tops could only blubber out in reply: "We

never shall find him. That's where it is. Here's his fortin recovered from drownding, and his wife left all afresh to him in a new will, and the double event ain't no more than if it hadn't happened. I tell you, he's scratched clean out of the race, altogether."

"I do not despair yet," said Susan. "I've great faith in our friend the Downy's positive statement, that he saw Mr. Aubrey alive within the last few days."

"Then why didn't he stop him? That's what I want to know. Does he know that she's alive? Perhaps you could trust him with the secret, though you didn't tell me all this long time. And it might have saved his life, that's what it might, just to have known that he hadn't 'murdered' her, as he called it. Not that she ever was murdered, even if she wasn't alive."

"Of course," observed Susan, "the Downy knew the secret; seeing that it was him who jumped into the water, and saved her life at the risk of his own. I would have told you twenty times over, and in fact longed to do so; but it was not my secret, and Mrs. Aubrey would not hear of any one being told. You see she had quite turned against her husband, and wouldn't allow his name even to be mentioned to her. A benevolent lady furnished her with the means to go abroad, and, I believe, set Mr. Downy up in business, in which he soon came to grief, as I have understood since our return. Now you see how it was that I couldn't tell you how matters really were."

"I see," said Tops, gloomily, "and a pretty mess you've all made of it—that is, if it is true that she

has forgiven him, and is sweet on him after all. Perhaps we shall be able to find out where he's buried, though I doubt if that's an easy matter. She'd be able to take some of them flowers, which I see in the 'Morning Advertiser' they throwed to her at the Hopera so plentiful last Thursday night, and put 'em on his parish grave, that is, if the surgeons haven't had him, and made a skelington of his poor bones. I suppose she's anxious enough to find him now, and live with him, unless she's been and got married again in furren parts. Nothing would surprise me, especially now his fortin's turned up."

"I don't know that she would have him," said Susan; "and it strikes me that his fortune being turned up, as you call it, is as likely as anything to stop her, if she had any such idea in her head. And what's more she isn't married, nor ever will be, that is quite certain, at least to any one else. She's only wrapped up in her child, the dearest little darling you ever saw, and I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Tops, I don't understand any such insinuations, neither from you nor any one else, and I think you and me are very likely to quarrel."

"Child!" shouted Tops. "What child? Whose child? They never had no child. What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," replied Susan; "that a little boy was born in Rome, and he will be four years old next December, and he is as like his father as ever a child was, which in my opinion has done more to soften her heart towards one who behaved so ill to her, than anything else could have done."

"Where is the young un?" cried Tops. "Let me see him, afore there's another word said."

"I don't know that I shall let you see him at all. You have offended me very much. You choose to forget all that angel suffered, and to be inclined to abuse her; as if you'd never had any cause to be ashamed of yourselves, you and your master together."

"And I tell you," said Tops, "that I've nothing to be ashamed of; and as for the gov'nor, I should think you and your missus had been pretty well revenged agen him any time these four years past. I don't say she had no cause to be aggeravated, and do all she did at the first start. But there ought to be a hend to heverything, and it strikes me she's waited a little too long, that's all about it."

"So you think that a woman is to be neglected, and deceived, and driven to make away with herself, and to come round in a moment, do you? Who's fault is it that she wasn't drowned? Who hindered her from dying in an asylum for the indigent blind?" asked Susan, rapidly.

"One," replied Tops, "that angry and revengeful folk is very apt to forget, when they're a reckoning others up. One as we're none of us too mindful of when——"

Susan was so struck with the sudden turn which Tops had given to their conversation, that for once she had nothing to say in answer, but put an abrupt termination to the sermon which Mr. Tops had commenced by hurriedly seizing her bonnet, and tying the strings a precious sight quicker, as Mr. Tops

afterwards said, than if she'd been sent for the doctor. Throwing her light summer shawl round her with a dexterous twist, she cast a look of haughty indignation at Tops.

"You remind me," she said, "I shall be in time for the afternoon service. I don't want you to preach to me anyways. Good afternoon."

"Susan! Susan! don't be a fool!" exclaimed Tops.

"Thank you," she said, with her hand on the door-handle; when a smart knock caused her to pause, and a face, which the most astute diplomatist might have envied for its consummate serenity and assurance, was suddenly made visible.

"Ax yer pardin," said the intruder, "didn't know you wos alone. Good mornin' this evenin', werry much thank yer. How air yer to-morrer? Thought the old lady was here, or wouldn't 'ave come up vithout writin'. Two's kimpany, and three's none. Hallow me the honner!" And the Downy, for he it was, once more respectably attired in a whole suit of unpretending cut and hue, gallantly took Mrs. Susan by the hand, which he squeezed, whilst bestowing a series of the most patronising winks and nods on Tops. "Vell, you air a lucky feller," he said. "I couldn't a' thought that the air in furren parts was so fayverabble to beauty. Hallo!" he cried, as if struck by a sudden remembrance, "of course, to be sure, it's my birthday," and with that he gave Susan a chaste salute on both cheeks with such rapidity, that his purpose could hardly have been defeated.

"Well, I'm sure!" said Susan, "you're the last man I should have expected such a liberty from, Mr. Downy."

"I ax your pardin," said that gentleman, "if I've made any mistake. The fact is, I'd a twin brother as wos born this month, and I sometimes forgets which of us it air. Besides, I am so glad to see you back, and about to make my friend 'ere a 'appy man."

With any other man, at any other time, Tops would certainly have quarrelled. But the Downy was a privileged mortal, and Susan had just shown a disposition, as he thought, to jilt him; so he merely said:

"Perhaps you're mistaken in more things than one; but what I want to ask you once more most particular before we talk of any other mortal thing, is, whether or not you was mistaken in thinking you saw my old master, Mr. Arthur Aubrey, last Tuesday was a week, about seven o'clock, in front of St. George's Church, Hanover-square?"

"I see him," answered the Downy, "I tells yer agen this vunce, and no more, as sure as I see you now, and wot's more I spoke to him, and he hanswered me."

"And you know'd that Mrs. Aubrey was alive, and never so much as told him, and pr'aps saved his life. I tell you, I've found out all about his propperty, or at least I'm on the right line to find it out, and here you've let him go on thinking himself a murderer, or next door to it, and no better off than a beggar in the street. I tell you, I don't thank you

for it, and what's more, I don't like you for it. And if I was sure it was him, I don't think I should ever care to have a drain of anything in your company again."

The Downy looked at Susan, and said: "So you've blowed the gaff at last. I'm werry glad on it, and I've vished you'd done it afore any time these four year. But I hopes you see, Mister Tops, that, vether you're pleased or not, I couldn't split, and that's jest all about it. If you'd hoffered me a thousand pound, I shouldn't 'ave told a vord, and now you know. That's special, and no mistake." Herewith, the Downy advanced towards the door. "I'm werry sorry," he said," "as things ain't turned out no better. I'd a told the poor gentleman myself at fust, hif I could 'ave had my way in the bis'ness. Mornin', miss."

"Stop," said Susan. "Mr. Tops is quite welcome to quarrel with me, if he pleases, as he seems to be inclined to do with you; but I don't see why others should suffer. I've only done my duty to my mistress, and I can remember the time when he kept his master's counsel and secrets remarkably well. I've nothing to say against that. The thing appears now to be—can you find Mr. Aubrey, and put us in communication with him? Of course, Mr. Tops will do as he pleases; but if he wants to spoil everything, as he certainly would do, he'll tell him when he is found, as God grant he may be ere long, that Mrs. Aubrey and the Signora Stellini are the same. It's true, I've got her leave to let Mr. Tops into the secret, and she has, in my belief, only come to England to see if

she can find her husband. But as for any reconciliation, that must be left to her. All I know is, that I shouldn't like ever to speak of it in her hearing. This discovery about the will is quite another thing, and the sooner Mr. Aubrey knows that, the better it will be for him. And what's more," added Susan with spirit, "though fortune would make no difference to her, yet if he's half the man I take him for, he'd rather die than owe anything to his wife, who has sustained such injury at his hands. And now, Mr. Tops, perhaps you'll tell us what information you've got, and what you propose to do, in order to get hold of the papers, which must be got, as well as to find out where Mr. Aubrey is."

Mr. Tops listened to this long speech from the accomplished lady's maid with great attention. He felt that he was what he would himself have called "in the wrong box" He could not but acknowledge, on reflection, that Mrs. Aubrey had a right to act as she had done under the circumstances; and that neither Susan nor the Downy could have betrayed her, without forfeiting their respective characters for honesty and good faith. Still he wasn't inclined to knock under all at once. So he repressed a strong inclination to shake the Downy by the hand, and to ask Susan for her forgiveness; and on his mother making her appearance, which she did at that moment, be spoke quite sharply to the astonished old lady, and requested to know why she had put nothing on the table to offer their guests.

All this Susan understood perfectly; but it didn't prevent Mrs. Tops from feeling deeply aggrieved. It

was the foreshadow of the daughter-in-law on her humble hearth.

"I'm sure, James," said his mother, "I didn't know that your young lady would take anything before dinner, and this young man as, he'll excuse me, I didn't know was a-coming, he has only just come in, which I met him myself atop of the mews. I'm sure, I'm very glad to see any of my son's friends." And she curtsied to the Downy. "What would you please to take, sir?" And without waiting for an answer, she put two bottles, one of stout, and one of pale ale, on the table, with an ancient spirit-stand, which had been a wedding gift to her mother just sixty-three years before.

"Come," said Tops, in a more cheerful and social tone, "give it a name. What shall it be?"

"Afore you draws a cork," replied the Downy, "I vants jest to know if you're agoin' to withdraw a hobserwation as you jest now made. It ain't accordin' to my noshuns to act parliamentary and call a man yer right honnorable friend, vile you're a makin' him out no better than the biggest thief in the vurld. Nor I don't eat and drink at the expense of hany one as don't consider as I don't hact on the square. That may suit the hairystocrisy, but it don't suit me. So you've jest got to say vich it is, and 'ow it is. No offence, mum" (to the old lady); "it ain't hoften as I troubles a respectable family like this, and I ain't agoin' to do no such a thing now, if my condick is kevestioned, as your son's bin a-doin' of it. But this needn't be in the way of bis'ness and our dooty to others. It's honly in respect of the liquor."

"Allow me to say, Mrs. Tops," said Susan in her turn, "that your son having an important communication to make respecting a family where we lived, I am only waiting in consequence of that; and you'll pardon me, if I also say that my visit must be considered now as entirely relating to the welfare and happiness of other people."

"Won't you take off your bonnet, my dear?" said the widow, who saw that her son was vexed and agitated.

"No thank you, dear Mrs. Tops," was the amiable reply; but the look which Tops *fils* got immediately after on his advancing a step towards her, was what a Yankee would have designated "a caution to rattlesnakes."

Tops hesitated, and then offered his hand to the Downy. "I don't see as you could have acted different," he said, "and I'm sorry I spoke."

"A drop of gin, cold, hif you please," was the Downy's answer, addressed to the old lady.

During this ceremony, in which the Downy gallantly insisted that the old lady should join, which she did with "sweet (so far as a lump of sugar was concerned) reluctant, amorous delay," Susan divided her attention between a coaching print of the old "Royal Defiance" in a snow-storm, and an elegant Geneva watch, a late gift from her mistress. Tops approached her and attempted to take her hand, which she indignantly snatched away.

"Susan!" said Tops, falteringly, "Susan, I was wrong, and I don't wish to deny it; but if you'd

knowed what he suffered afore my eyes, as was always the best of masters to man and 'oss, and perhaps now, if he's alive, ain't got a roof over his head, nor a bite of vituals to eat, you wouldn't wonder that I cut up rough, thinking as you and the Downy here might have spared him the worst of it. I see now that you couldn't have done different from what you did. I see him well-nigh dead of grief and fever, afore he bolted, cos he wouldn't be a burden to me no longer. All I can say is, that I hope he'll get his own, which he will if he's alive now, and as for telling him that his wife, as was my old missus, is alive, if I should ever see him again, I leave even that to you, as I believe you know what is best, and will act according, as old Blowhard, I mean Binsby, used to say. Will you forgive me?"

Under other circumstances, it is probable that Mrs. Susan would have held out for some time. Women who give their lovers most pain and trouble during courtship, often turn out the most patient helpmates in wedded life. But this was Susan's first visit to the maternal Tops, and she really liked her intended all the more for his devotion to his master, to whom she had long eagerly desired to see Blanche reunited. So, though she again snatched her hand from the attempted grasp of Tops, she embraced his mother warmly, while bursting into a flood of tears.

"Deary me, now!" cried the old lady, "whathever have you been a-doing of, James? Come in here, my dear, and take your bonnet off." And she

forthwith took Susan out of the room; but not before Tops had caught her in his arms and given her a dozen ardent kisses.

"I say young man," said the Downy, "respect the feelinx of a third party, will yer? How do yer know but that you'll be a-startin' me hoff into materimony, afore I can afford a carridge and a grand pie-anny. Dror it mild the next time yer comes out in that 'ere line in kimpany, vill yer?"

In a very short time Susan re-entered the room. "Come," she said, "let us hold our cabinet council. Tell Mr. Downy here all about the letter, or perhaps you'd better give it to me to read aloud to you."

"Well," said Tops, "the fact is this. T'other evening I drove old Grinderby home as usual in the 'mourning-coach,' and the next day very early I see this letter" (pulling it out of his pocket) "behind one of the cushions. You see, he had either stuck it there himself and forgot it, or it had come out of his pocket, which the tailors makes so very shaller now-a-days, in order, I suppose, that you might lose the receipt for your ready-made clothes. I've often found papers behind there afore. Well, I thought I would take it in at breakfast time, and I jest stuck it in the winder, for fear of forgetting of it, and I had nigh finished work, and was a-whistling like one o'clock, and a-thinking of my Susan here, when I chanced to look at the letter, which I believe I was nigh putting in my pocket and taking to the house for the old un, when I see the name of Arthur Aubrey, Eskvire, leastways without the Eskvire, but there was Arthur

Aubrey plain, as you'll see. I hope, ladies and gentleman," said Tops, with mock gravity, "that I shan't forfeit your good opinion when I tell you, that I not only read that letter through, but that I afterwards quite forgot to give it back to the owner." With this, Mr. Tops handed the letter to Susan.

"Letter put in, and read accordin'," quoth the Downy at this juncture.

"The letter," said Susan, "is dated 'Deptford, Friday,' and is as follows:

"'You infernal old cuss!'"

"That's a perlite beginnin'," quoth the Downy.

"It's plain speaking," said Tops. "Don't you see that the letter is addressed to Grinderby by somebody as knows him? Drive on, Susey."

"'I'm not,'" she accordingly continued, "'going to be made a fool of by you any longer. You must either fork out the amount I named at our last interview, or I shall tell Arthur Aubrey everything, and trust rather to his coming out strong—hate him as I do—more than to the liberality and honour of a lawyer. Now I just wish to inform you that I am getting ugly, and won't stand no more darned nonsense and shuffling. Either you'll come down handsome with the dollars—I want three thousand pounds sterling, or I'll give Aubrey the will, and tell him what I have refused for it. It's a large stake, remember. You won't be long squeezing that out of the property; and how much have you nobbled already, which you'll have to disgorge, like a shark ripped up on the deck of a three-master, if I speak the word. You say Aubrey cannot be found. Can't he? Let *me*

try to find him. If he was dead, as you say, there is the next heir would be uncommon glad of a visit from our American cousin. What do *you* think? Now don't come any delays with me, for I won't have it. You tried that game on at your accursed den in Webb's Fields, once too often to suit me. It wasn't quite prudent of you, Mister Grinderby, to set them young lawyer's spawn a-grinning at me for three quarters of an hour, while you were shuffling over your papers of lies up-stairs. I tell you I've put lead, ay, and cold steel, into a man for less, and I'll do it to you, if you raise my dander, I will by——'"

Here Susan stopped. "I don't quite understand what comes next," she said, "but it looks something dreadful."

"Go on with what he says about meeting him. That's the ticket," remarked Tops. "Never mind the oaths. I forgot all about them, which I hope you'll excuse, my dear."

Susan, who had been quietly finishing the letter to herself, complied at once.

"'Now, I tell you what it is, old hoss, I ain't a going to stand any more humbug, so make your choice. You'll come and see me this time, d'ye understand? There ain't no lawyers' clerks here. I shall expect you at eight o'clock on Tuesday evening with the cash—short, mind, nothing over fifties! I'll then give you the will, and this time you can see it's genuine. I shan't stay in England more than twelve hours after. It's a precious sight too hot, I can tell you. I don't half like that dirty, loping, scarecrow messenger of yours.'"

"Ha! ha!" interrupted Tops. "That's one for you, Mr. Downy. How do you like the description?"

"It's nothing but right-down wiciousness a-tryin' to describe wirtue," replied that individual.

"'T'other day,'" continued Susan, reading, "'when you were fool enough not to wait till I came, as if *you* never kept any one waiting, dash you! the beggarly skunk brought another worse-looking vagabond in the rummiest cut toggery I ever saw.'"

"That's you, Mr. Tops! You've got it handsome this time," cried the Downy. "I'm sorry to interrupt you. Pray go on, miss!"

"'This precious pair of tripe-faced cockneys,'" continued Susan, still reading, "'had the insolence to ask me all sorts of questions. I had some difficulty to keep from whipping the pair of sneaking, shivering, swamp-raised cusses together, I tell you, and the next time I catch them they'd best look out for squalls. I've seen the long-tailed cuss somewhere before, I guess. It was either in a thieves' kitchen, where I was hiding out of the way of the beaks, or else he was doorkeeper to a copper-hell in Leicester-square. Such a hang-dog face as his isn't easy forgotten altogether. So don't send that live scarecrow again to me, if you're likely to want him any more in your garden.'"

"Upon my word," said Susan, "the writer's remarks are extremely complimentary."

Mr. Tops expressed himself rather strongly about punching heads, but the equanimity of the Downy didn't seem in the least disturbed.

Susan continued her reading with an expression of quiet amusement not altogether unmingled with an indefinite expression of alarm.

"'To cut it short, old fellow, you'd best stump up, if you don't want to smell brimstone premature. At eight o'clock P.M., on Tuesday, mind, sharp, and the toast of the evening after our little business is settled shall be with all my heart—"May we never meet again on this side of——!"

"'Disrespectfully yours,

"'J. S. M.'"

It is not to be supposed that the ruffian, whose precious communication we have just transferred to these pages, left any blanks in his letter to be filled up at discretion.

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Susan, "a very pretty epistle. I hope, James, you are not so foolish as to think of having anything to do with such a person?"

"Hem!" said Tops, "we'll think about that by-and-by. What do you think this cove means about giving up the will for three thousand pounds, and threatening if the money ain't paid, and it ain't a trifle neither, to tell Mr. Arthur?"

"I see," said the Downy; "he must 'ave took this ere lieyer for pardner, and was wound up by Chancery."

"No!" said Susan; "his father, the old gentleman who made the fortune and bought the estate, left a will tying him up so strict, as I heard say, that he

could only spend the income, and couldn't borrow any money at all. And when he'd overrun the constable, as they call it, the lawyers, and among them this very Grinderby, stepped in, and they got everything into Chancery on behalf of the entail, and there's nothing left for him to live on, as he's forfeited his rights."

"I said it were Chancery, but how come the old chap to make this 'ere werry spicy harrangement in favour of the lieyers?" asked the Downy.

"It was when he and Mr. Arthur were not on the best of terms," replied Susan.

"Some time afore the old un kicked the bucket, I dare say?" suggested the Downy.

"I believe it was," said Susan.

"D'ye know if they wos friends—I mean your guvenor and his father, afore the old chap died?" pursued the Downy.

"The best in the world," replied Susan. "In fact, they were quite reconciled."

"Then it's as plain as 'V. R.' of a hillumination night, there wos another vill," said the Downy, "and this 'ere chap has got it."

"But who can he be?" said Tops.

"Whoever he air," remarked the Downy, "accordin' to the descripshun, he knowed you someveres afore, at least so he says. I'm 'appy to say it wos afore I knowed yer either."

"How did you manage to get let out of the garden, afore the cherry season was over?" retorted Tops. "I think you'd best shut up."

"Look here, James," said Susan. "Don't you remember the clerk of the late Mr. Aubrey, who ran away soon after his death?"

"I see him once," replied Tops. "He was a tall, stout gent. It was the very first week that I lived with Mr. Arthur. He was in trouble then. Let's see, what was his name? It began with a M."

"Manvers, to be sure," cried Susan.

"That's the ticket," said Tops. "Then this is him, and this 'ere will is one as he has concealed and took with him to Amerikey. And now he's offered to sell it to old Grinderby for three thousand pound. Stop! what have I heard of him besides?"

"He was suspected of having committed a murder," said Susan, "and there was a reward offered for his apprehension. Oh, James, do be careful what you have to do with such a man!"

"So much the heasier job for us," said the Downy. "I s'pose there's no mistake, no danger of wrong wot's-his-name, somethink as begins vith a hi, no to-therification, I means—mistakin' of him for another bloke, and all that?"

"I can swear to the man now myself," answered Tops; "for all his disguise and Yankee lingo. He'd robbed the gov'nor of a sight of money then, and was let off heasy. I'll let him off this time, when I catch him."

"The job's got to be done soon," remarked the Downy. "There ain't much time atween this and Toosday. I'll pound it old Grinderby won't be long afore he burns that 'ere vill, if hever he gets it into his vicked old fingers."

"He'll not throw away a chance this time," said Tops. "We must have the will, before it changes hands. Couldn't we manage so as to collar the three thousand as well?"

The Downy shook his head. "I should be werry sorry to try," he said.

"I didn't mean for us, you blessed garden himage out for a Sunday," said Tops; "I meant to collar it for him as it belongs to, Arthur Aubrey, Eskvire, with three cheers and a little one in. Here, fill your glasses." And so saying, he filled a bumper all round, uncorking a bottle of ginger-beer for Susan, and proposed the governor's health, and long life to him, wherever he was to be found. When the excitement of this had passed, Mr. Tops desired his mother to hurry dinner, a request that never yet occasioned anything save increased delay, with the exception of ill-temper. "For," said he, "we must tackle this Manvers this very night."

"Tacklin's all werry well," said the Downy, "purvidin' we *can* tackle him; but s'pose we had him safe and in the jug anyveres, 'ow air we to drop on the vill? I'm for tryin' some dodge, sech as gettin' round the landlord of the public as he uses, and droppin' in upon him jest ven hold Grinderby and him's together a squarin' of the plant."

"It's awful risky," said Tops.

"I didn't think as you'd be afeard," said the Downy. "I should fancy the pair on us could tackle him. I'm a' precious sight stronger nor I look."

"Afraid!" quoth Tops, with scorn. "Whoever

thought of such a thing? I'm only afraid of not getting hold of the will."

"I hope," said Susan, "you'll neither of you be such fools as to think of fighting with a low murdering ruffian like this Tadgers, or Manvers, or whatever's his name. I'm sure, for my part, I should despise any man who would condescend to such vulgarity."

"Well," retorted Tops, "I should think myself a sneak, if I was to shy at such a job."

"There are two ways of setting about it," said Susan; "and if you go blundering head-over-heels into a disgraceful affair, I'll never speak to you again."

"Do you mean to say that we are to do nothing, and suffer our old gov'nor to be robbed in this way without doing nothing?" inquired Tops.

"I don't know what you call doing 'nothing,' Mr. Tops," said the lady of his affections; "but I can't see what good you'll do by being stabbed or shot, and, perhaps, losing a limb or an eye for your pains. The proper thing to do is to communicate with the police."

The Downy whistled. "It's too wenturesome a game for them. They'd never do it."

"Nonsense!" responded Susan. "They must. What are they paid for, I should like to know?"

"So should I," said the Downy. "Pr'aps it's for hindrin' poor folks from gettin' their livin', and overturnin' horanges and happles into the streets—pr'aps it's for takin' hup little boys under six year old on a

Sunday for hollerin', and lockin' 'em up all night in a cold cell—pr'aps it's for takin' money from a parcel of poor gals to let 'em alone, and pinchin' and dislocatin' the arms of them as don't or can't pay—pr'aps it's for drivin' cabbies and busmen wild, and takin' away their licenses for nothink—pr'aps it's for follerin' gents as is hout late and hintimadatin' 'em by tellin' 'em it's a dry night, 'till the party's glad to give 'em a shillin' to go away—pr'aps——"

"That will do, Mr. Downy," interrupted Susan; "we know your sentiments on that subject; and if you please we'll just try if we can't make the police do their duty this time. Where's that handsome friend of yours, James? I mean the inspector who was sent to America to take Clark, the poisoner——"

"Oh! you mean Lanner," said Tops; "I haven't set eyes on him these three years."

"Well, I suppose he is to be found," said Susan. "Tell him the whole affair, and put it in his hands. We'll assure him of a handsome reward if he succeeds, and pay him for his time and trouble in any case. Besides, is there not a reward already offered for this Manvers, if it is the same man?"

"Of course there is," replied Tops. "I never thought of that."

"Of course you didn't," said Susan. "When did one of your wise sex ever think of anything sensible? Find out Lanner at once, and lay your three heads together. If you want any further advice, you can all send for *me*."

"I should have thought," said Tops, "you wouldn't like to risk hurting the beauty of such a handsome man as Mr. Lanner."

This was rather a sore subject for Tops. In former days, Mr. Lanner had been somewhat particular in his attentions to Susan. That young lady tossed her head.

"I'm sure," she said, "I never saw anything very uncommon in him myself; only it was the fashion to say he was good-looking. I never looked at him enough, perhaps, to find it out. It's not likely, indeed—a policeman who takes up thieves and comes home with murderers. I'm sure I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Tops. Perhaps I am not so particular in my choice as I might be."

"Capting Lanner," observed the Downy, "is a werry clever genelman, a werry clever genelman indeed. I wos thinkin' of them hordinary perlice as acts sentries to the larders of an approvin' country. If so be as Capting Lanner takes a hinterest in the matter, vy it's vun for our American cousin's nob. My advice is to foller your young lady's reckymindation."

"Was Captain Lanner ever in the Army or Navy?" asked Susan.

"Ve calls the inspector capting," answered the Downy, "hever since he took that carrackter, to grab a party as had broke the Henlistment Hact. He's very pleasant company is the capting, and as hartful as he is pleasant. It ain't above a week since I see him at Bow-street."

It was, therefore, finally moved by Mrs. Susan,

seconded by D. Cove, Esquire, and carried by acclamation, that Mr. Lanner should forthwith be waited upon by a deputation consisting of Tops and the Downy; and requested to concert measures for the recovery of the will, which was supposed to be in the hands of Tadgers, *alias* Manvers, and for the discomfiture of Grinderby's nefarious designs.

"There's only one thing I can't see clear," said Tops. "How can I go in against any one whose victuals I eat and whose uniform I wear? Well, I'll eat no more of his victuals, nor take no more of his money from this very hinstant. I'll get discharged to-morrow morning at a minute's notice, when I've drove him to the office."

"Right you air," said the Downy, "I respex them feelinx of yourn. It's wot I should do myself. And as you can't werry vell be hout of it afore to-morrer, I'll hopen the case, as the lieyers call it, to the capting, and you needn't do nothink agen your conshunce."

After the little episode of a sudden burst of wailing and lamentation from the maternal Tops, who had a vague notion that something dreadful was going to happen, further discussion was set aside by the advent of a small girl with the dinner, which consisted of a shoulder of mutton baked over potatoes in a brown dish, and which it must be owned spread a most appetising fragrance in the air.

"I say," said the Downy, "is it true that some of the nobs as is allers henvious of our luxuries is agoin' to do avay with hot jints on Sunday?"

"They never can be such a set of hypocritical

fools," cried Susan. "If they do, there ought to be a revolution, that's all I have to say."

"I should like to have the punishment of such a lot," remarked Tops. "I'd give their insides a holiday, till they were pretty nigh dead with hunger and thirst, and then tie 'em to postises opposite the bakers' shops of a Sunday, and let 'em smell all the dinners agoing out."

"How they can have the heart to do it, I can't tell," said Susan.

"'Art!" cried the Downy; "their 'arts is cold cat's-meat, and wot their brains is 'twould lick the whole Collidge of Surgeons to tell—soap-suds and live maggots, I should think."

"Why can't they be quiet?" continued Tops. "They get their own hot dinners and their wine on Sundays, as well as every other day in the week; they've their kitchens at home, and their clubs to go to, and they can't be happy without being shocked at the deplorable immorality of a baked jint and potatoes on Sunday."

"I wonder their religion don't choke 'em some times," said the Downy.

"There ain't no denying," remarked Tops, "that the wickeder a rich man is, the more he keeps pegging away at the comforts of the lower orders. If their own lives was reckoned up, they'd be glad to drop the hot tater on Sunday humbug pretty sharp."

"It's my opinion," said the old lady, "that the hot-houses is all took good care of on Sunday; for my own brother is head-gardener to Lord Tipton and Wednesbury, and he don't get no holiday, as I know

on, for I asked him to come this blessed day, and he said it was as much as his place was worth, and there was ever so many foreigners coming to dinner, and he'd all the grapes to cut for 'em."

"It's werry kind on 'em, I'm sure," said the Downy, "as they don't start a Parlymentairy Committee on the special to stop them himmoral cabbages from growing of a Sunday in a poor man's garding. If they could honly do it and clap the hextra power on to pine-apples, they'd werry soon try it, and no mistake."

"What an eloquent set out it would be," said Susan. "Only fancy, 'Growing depravity of the lower classes.'"

"The Harchbishop of Middlesex in the cheer," added the Downy.

"Lord Shamsbury wished to know if the Act couldn't be extended to water-creases," observed Tops.

"Professor Graveworm," continued Susan, "produced a gooseberry which would only ripen on week-days. It was a small sour kind especially adapted to cottages. He had devoted several successive Sabbaths to the minute observation of this interesting fruit."

"That's about the ticket," said the Downy. "That's just wot they'd like to be hup to, and have an extra lot of bobbies to go into the cottagers' gardings with a bull's-eye, 'arter twelve o'clock on Saturday nights, to pull hup hall that was growin' contrairy to the Hact. Talkin' of bull's-eyes, I knowed a gent at Tottenham, as never could grow no wall-fruit. It

allers wanished jest afore it was ripe. Vell, he goes agen and agen to the perlice inspector, and he says it's quite impossible as strangers could do it; for, says he, our hofficers is allers on the look-out. Vun night the gent looks hout of his bedroom vinder, and he sees a werry curious sort o' light a bobbin' up and down his peach-vall, vich he couldn't hexplain novays. It wos as dark as pitch, yer see. So he takes his rewolwer and puts on his coat vith a hanti-garotting coller, hall spikes and fish-hooks, and down he goes in his carpet shoes, and wot do yer think he found?"

"Can't say," said Tops for the company.

"A perlice sarjent turnin' his bull's-eye on to the nectarinds, a feelin' on 'em to see if they wos there all right.

"'Good mornin', friend,' says he, for it wos close on two o'clock. 'The same to you, sir," says the bobby. 'I thought I heerd steps,' he says. 'Ah! I see,' says the gent, 'and so you're a-taking stock beforehand, to see wot's ready to be missed. Werry thoughtful,' says he. 'Pray valk into my 'ouse and 'ave a drop of summat 'ot.' 'Werry much obliged,' says the bobby, 'but I'd rather not leave my dooty,' says he. Vell the gent didn't know 'ow to nail him at first, but presently he pretends to slip and cotched hold of the bobby's coat-pockets to save himself from fallin', quite forgettin' his spiked coller, and the bobby he cotches hold of that, and then there was a pretty hullibaloo. Vell the hupshot wos that two more perlice swore the next morning they found a heap of fruit nigh the gate ready to be took hoff, and that the sarjent wos

only takin' it to the station kvite correct, and the gent, who was werry fond of gardenin', sold hoff heverything and vent to live in France, and the wigilance of the perlice was thought worthy of a testymonial by the folks in Tottenham, for so nearly havin' cotched a desperate robber in the hact."

We shall now leave the Downy and Mr. Tops to go in search of Inspector Lanner. We feel it a real privilege that the events of our story enable us to introduce such a character. Being denied the opportunity of laying before our readers the subtle workings of the human heart as displayed in adultery and bigamy; not even having a golden-haired domestic female poisoner at our disposal to drug (say her twin sister previously adored by her) in child-bed, in order to indulge her incestuous passion for the husband of the above, a tall, pale solicitor with blue-black whiskers and a blue-bag containing a magnetic "power of attorney," strong enough to fascinate all the young ladies in the shire; in default, we say, of these and other requisites for modern success, it is something to have a detective officer to fall back on. Only we are afraid that our detective will be a very ordinary personage, indeed. He will *not* combine the qualities of a Mathews the elder, the facial powers of Herr Schultz, and the rapid disguises of Woodin, with the scent, vision, and instincts of a Red Indian.

He will *not* step up to the guilty baronet at the exact moment, when he is about to start for America, and whisper the number of the gold repeater which he has just nervously consulted for the last time. He

will not be summoned from London by a telegram to treat a Cabinet Minister with cool contempt mingled with the pity of a superior being, and immediately spot the missing despatches on the person of the cook, who turns out to be a Russian agent in disguise, and whom the detective handcuffs in calm triumph immediately after family devotion. This is quite in accordance with the style in vogue, and hits the taste of the present age, far better than the romances of Sir Walter Scott, or anything necessitating the exercise of the higher intellectual faculties.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A SANDWICH WITHOUT SALT.

Though my heart-strings crack, I will not yield unto a disobedient child. Let him prove me wrong! It shall not set him right who has defied me thus. What! Is it for this that we watch over the infancy which they forget, that we hang o'er their beds in illness, and applaud their gambols in health, that we weep alike over their chastisements and rewards, that we live a new life in them, and abandon our pleasures and even our habits for their sakes? No! Rather like the strange insect that we read of, let them destroy the parent life, than rob us of our pride, our remembrance, our reward, the grace of propagation, and the honour of old age.—*Reverend M. T. Kickerow's Sermons on Domestic Ties. Discourse VIII. On Parental Obstinacy.*

"ARE you drunk, you rascal?" said Mr. Grinderby to his coachman the next afternoon, after the date of the little dinner at that individual's lodgings over the stable.

It must be owned that there was some reason in the inquiry; for Mr. Tops had a remarkably flushed and excited appearance, and his livery hat had apparently been lent to a conjurer, and was placed on his head in a mingled style of gaiety and defiance.

"What's that you say?" was the unceremonious answer.

"I say, are you drunk, you villain?" cried Grinderby, in a loud and angry tone.

"Not exactually," was the answer, "seeing that I've had nothing but some of your beer to drink, 'Grinderby's partickler.'"

"I discharge you this instant, you scoundrel!" was the reply.

"That's actionable," said Tops. "Here!" he cried, opening a door leading to the office where the clerks were sitting (for this interview took place in Mr. Grinderby's own room in Webb's Fields). "Here! Hi! some of you limbs of Satan, come here, will yer? I've put up with a great deal too much, and I don't mean to put up with it no longer, and after I've driven the 'osses home, I'm going to leave. This sort of life ain't respectable."

"This insolence from a servant!" cried Grinderby. "I'll have you up before a magistrate, fellow!" Then, after a moment's pause, he said, "You may take the horses home, sir, as I remain here late, and then leave my house. I shall not give you a character, and your balance of wages to this date will depend upon your conduct."

"Character from you! That's a good un," answered Tops. "After half-past five, I'm no longer in your service, and you may keep your wages to yourself." And Mr. Tops made a most unceremonious exit.

"His behaviour is very suspicious," said Grinderby to himself. "I hope he has not by any chance picked up that letter which I missed so strangely. But I am pretty sure that I tore it up by mistake with those other papers. I was tearing them, when the postman came. To-morrow I must go and see

that ruffian, and try to satisfy him with the smallest possible sum. He is hard pressed, and five or six hundred pounds ought to get me that will, and then—— But somehow everything seems to have gone wrong with me of late." Here he rang a hand-bell, and our old acquaintance Snap made his appearance. "Tell the boy," said Grinderby, sharply, "to bring my lunch. I rang for him." Snap disappeared, and presently the boy made his appearance with a tray on which was a small sandwich and a glass of water. The old lawyer tasted this not too luxurious fare, and suddenly his face grew dusky and livid with passion. "Here, you sirrah!" he almost screamed to the boy. "How dare you! You young scamp, you atrocious, profligate, swindling villain, you dog, you!" And he struck him three or four heavy blows with the tray over the head.

"Oh! oh!" screamed the boy. "What have I done?"

"To bring me my sandwich without salt, after all that I have said, you imp, you! How dare you?" And he boxed the boy's ears.

"It wasn't me as cut 'em," sobbed the lad. "'Tain't my fault."

Here Mr. Snap re-entered the room. He laid a small slip of paper before Mr. Grinderby, on which the name of a visitor was inscribed, after the manner of solicitors' offices.

"Mr. Leslie!" said Grinderby. "I don't know the name. Did he say what his business is? Is he a gentleman?"

Snap looked at his employer with a mingled glance

of expectation, doubt, and malice. "I don't know whether I'm right or not, Mr. Grinderby, to mention it, but the gent looks uncommon like your son."

"My son, sir! he would not dare. Am I to understand that it is he or not? Why the devil don't you speak plain."

"It is him," said Snap. "I'd have spoken out plainer, but didn't know how you'd like it."

"And pray, sir, what business have you to think about what don't concern you? Upon my word, sir, you are getting on. You are becoming far too valuable for this office, Mr. Snap."

"Then perhaps," returned Snap, doggedly, "you won't mind increasing my salary twenty pounds a-year. I've been intending to ask you this last month."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Grinderby. "Pray proceed. Anything else?"

"Yes," said Snap; "me and the other clerks have been agoing to ask, if we can't go away at two o'clock on Saturdays, like all the other clerks."

"Yes, sir, on one condition, and that is that you don't return here, sir, on Mondays, or any other day. Leave the room, sir!" thundered Grinderby, "leave the room."

"Then perhaps you'll accept three months' notice in writing," continued Snap, perfectly unappalled.

"Leave the room, sir!" reiterated Grinderby.

"Shall I tell Mr. Edgar—Leslie, that you'll see him?"

"Show him in!" was the reply, "and don't listen at the key-hole."

"Take a seat, sir," said the old lawyer, as his son was shown in. "What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"Father!" said Edgar, "believe me, I do not mean this as an intrusion; but I wish to speak to you on a matter of a most serious nature. It is not on my own account."

"Indeed!" said his father. "I thought perhaps that your precious newspaper had become bankrupt; or that your valuable services had been dispensed with, and that you had come here begging. As it happens, there is a desk vacant in this office, but I fear that your habits are scarcely suitable to any regular business. However, if you choose to cut that hair off your face, and call to-morrow at half-past nine, if your habits allow you to rise at such an early hour, I'll see what can be done."

"It is nothing of the kind, sir. It is about your own affairs I would speak," returned Edgar.

"Upon my word, sir!" said his father, "your condescension is overpowering. But as I am extremely busy" (and he began writing), "I would rather—if —you please—postpone the intended—favour," and he rang his bell for Snap. "Good afternoon, Mr. Leslie!"

Leslie took a newspaper from his pocket, and turning it so as to show a labelled paragraph, handed it to his father.

The latter took it and read it to himself. The paragraph ran as follows: "Threatened revelations.—It is stated that legal proceedings are about to be instituted, in reference to the estate of Mr. A——,

a gentleman who disappeared some four years since in a most mysterious manner, immediately after a tragical event which will be fresh in the recollections of our readers. A solicitor of some eminence is said to be deeply involved."

Mr. Grinderby, senior, exhibited no outward emotion, beyond an unwonted pallor, if such it could be called.

"Well, sir," he said, "is this precious composition yours? Have you become a penny-a-liner to write unmeaning libels and enter into vague conspiracies against—no matter whom, sir? I advise you to beware of an indictment for conspiracy, should this precious innuendo be caught at by any busy fool."

"I neither wrote it—nor do I know whence it emanates. There are rumours that Mr. Aubrey is not dead; but that he has been seen about in a sad state of destitution within the last three or four months. Oh! father, if there is any—anything wrong about this unfortunate affair, that you can set right, I have come to implore you to do it, ere it is too late."

"And I request you, sir, to leave my office, ere it is too late. Go to your penny-a-lining, sir; and when you can't get your bread at that, I will listen to your repentance, your apologies, and your excuses. As for this nonsense, it matters not, I tell you, whether that profligate idiot Aubrey is alive or dead. He has not a farthing interest in the estate, or its rents, of which I am appointed receiver by the Court of Chancery, sir, the Court of Chancery, do you hear?

And, sir, he owes the late firm of Grinderby and Cousens, or rather myself, sir, for I took the debts on myself when I dissolved partnership, to save him from the exposure of the Court, a sum of nearly two thousand pounds at this moment, to which the rents are not applicable. And now, sir, what more have you to say?"

"It is whispered that there is another will," said Edgar, "which, if found, would restore this Mr. Aubrey to affluence."

"Then you'd better find it, sir," cried his father; "and when you've found it, hark ye! come here again, and not before then. And so you get your living, do you? I should hardly have thought so, at least honestly, considering that you are such a fool; yes, sir, such a fool, I repeat."

"Better be a fool," said Edgar, "than——" But he prudently stopped himself.

"Than what, sir, may I ask?" inquired his father. "Finish your dutiful sentence, by all means. It will add a feather to your honourable career. But, in the mean time, mind you don't starve, sir, starve like a writer of sonnets and what not, in a garret or on a dung-heap. There was a fellow came touting here yesterday from an Author's Benevolent Aid Society, or some such thing. I am sorry I didn't give the fellow a donation for your sake, sirrah! For that is what your scribbling will bring you to before long. Look here, sir! I've done more than most fathers would, who have been treated as you have treated me. I have left you two pounds a-week in my will, to be paid weekly, mind. It will keep you out of the

workhouse, and out of want, if you don't take to drinking like others of your precious stamp. And now begone, sir! begone!"

"Oh, father!" cried Edgar, once more. "Believe me, I have not come here to insult or annoy you; but I feared there might be some truth in this thing. I never told you why I left home, and would not follow the profession which you chose for me. It was because of the cruel things I saw, the oppression and extortion, which I could not endure to witness. I knew how this very Mr. Aubrey was treated in this office—I knew——"

He stopped, for the old man had risen, shaking in every limb. "You lie! ungrateful boy. There has been nothing, save the usual—the ordinary practice of—the law, sir; yes, the law. And if I did not yield to sickly sentiment, which would have speedily brought me to ruin, yes to ruin—for whom was it, I pray? I wished to make you a gentleman and a barrister—to leave you the property which your sister will now inherit. Not another word. Go, sir, go! You have done well to change your name. I tell you I am busy. Will you have the kindness to leave this room, if you please?"

Edgar offered his hand, which his father rejected with a gesture of impatience, and unwillingly took his departure. As he went out, he met a very old clerk, a grey routinarian named Stubbs, a man who derived his sustenance from iniquity, as harmlessly as he possibly could, as a weevil or any other grub lives on rottenness, blindly. Altogether, somehow, he was not a bad old man. Indeed, he had

a strange, stupid reverence for the law, and would chuckle drearily and rub his hands over the success of injustice through some legal quirk, or the astute misrepresentation of a learned counsel. There are such miserable wretches, born with a moral strabismus, who have no particular harm in themselves, stingless blind-worms, crawling in old ways, efts and newts in the polluted cistern of injustice, who believe in foulness and worship the dirt in which they move, and on which they exist. This venerable nonentity followed Edgar to the outer door.

"Ah! master Edgar," he said, in feeble, quavering accents, "I'm glad to see you, sir, amongst us again. Your father, sir, is not the same man, since you left us. I hope you are coming to study the law. We shall see you a judge, sir, yet."

"No, Mr. Stubbs," replied Edgar, "I am just the same as ever. I am not fit for the profession, nor ever shall be."

"I thought of you, sir, in the great case of Black *v.* White, yesterday. The speech of the Attorney-General was superb. Your respected father retained him for Black, when we hadn't in equity, no, nor apparently in anything else, the ghost of a chance. It was a case of mining under a manufactory erected by White, and you see, sir, Black had only bought up some old abandoned shafts in order to get purchased out by White. Of course, when he pumped out the water, the buildings began to give way. There was some of the hardest swearing I ever had the pleasure of hearing. Black swore he bought the mine from his knowledge, in order to win a valuable seam of coal,

and White deposed that it was notorious there was no coal there. Then Black swore that his proceedings would not damage the buildings materially, even if he continued his operations under the whole field. There was a boundary stipulation; but he swore there was none, and our side squared the vendor of the mine at the very last moment, not to produce the stipulation, which was in a separate agreement. The engineers swore point blank against each other, just like doctors. The whole case rested on Black's evidence. It was beautiful to see how he behaved in the witness-box under the examination by Mr. Serjeant Queerfish, and how the Attorney-General got out of him some of the most artistic perjury ever offered in a Court of Justice. Every one knew it was the sheerest lying, but it could not be contradicted—we had managed the case so well. You see that Shycase, the eminent Q.C., was retained, but was engaged elsewhere, and Queerfish knew nothing of the case. He actually complimented Black on his position in the mining world, whereas he ought as far as possible to have shown up some of the earlier transactions of his life. So Black got sixty thousand pounds damages, and White is a ruined man. 'Ecod!' cried old Molewarp, Black's borer in the north, to his patron, 'thee deserves thy verdict, mon, that thee dost; for I'm thinking there isn't another chap in England that could have gone safe down that shaft, an' coom up again without ever touching a soide like of the truth.' It was the greatest triumph I have seen in a Court of Justice these fifty years, because we had to fight against all the facts of the case."

"You may call it a triumph, but I call it a disgrace," said Edgar. "It appears that every principle of justice was violated, as is too often the case."

"The law is very superior to justice, I should hope, or where should we lawyers be?" said the old clerk, with a ghastly attempt at cachinnation. "Ho, ho! Hee, hee!"

"Good day, Mr. Stubbs!" said Edgar, gently. "I hope your family are well, and that the law will never deal with them harshly. How would you like your home desolated by triumphant lying, sir, on the part of some reckless opponent, who should swear that your house stood on his land, and contrived by some fiendish plot in which perjury and bribery were the lightest components, to turn white into black in your case, sir, and *vice versâ?*"

"Dear me," said Mr. Stubbs, "I don't see how such a thing could be. I should take care to retain the Attorney-General in time."

"But what if the perjury on the other side was too strong?" asked Edgar.

"We would nullify it," said Mr. Stubbs, "by equally strong assertions; and, if necessary, stronger on ours. The truth, sir, never suffices, when the element of perjury is introduced by the other side. It would not suit our laws of evidence, as at present constituted."

"And you ask me, why I am not a lawyer?" said Edgar, escaping.

"Fine young man, very fine young man," said Mr. Stubbs, looking after him with something very like a sigh. "But decidedly," and he touched his fore-

head with his forefinger, "something wrong here. Such a pity, too, with such a father and a practice made, as it were, to his hand. Don't I wish I had had such a chance!"

"I say, Stubbs, old fellow," said the athletic Thibblethwaite, the chief common-law clerk of the office, who came in at that moment from executing some dirty job or other, with his hands in his cut-away pockets and a white hat stuck on one side of his head, "did you go to see the cove hanged this morning?"

"Can't say that I did, Mr. Thibblethwaite. It's—let me see—thirty years since I saw the majesty of the law vindicated. It's nothing now-a-days. Why I've seen as many as seven hanged in one morning, four for forgery, and three, I think, for sheep-stealing. One of the forgery lot was as fine a young man as I ever set eyes on. It was worth while seeing an execution then."

"Me and Bill Smithers, the chap over at Tozer's," replied the other, "we had a rare lark—didn't go to bed all night. I wish they wouldn't hang 'em on Monday though. It's so difficult to have a proper spree on Sunday night. We were obliged to go in for Van John and unlimited Loo, till half-past three. My eyes! didn't we hear some spicy talk among the thieves and their women! Bill Smithers said he thought he knew something; but they took the shine out of him, I can tell you. What do you think of this, old boy?"

And he uttered something in the ears of the elder, so ineffably foul and blasphemous, that one could

only imagine such a thing when heard to have been some unstifled echo of the sulphurous eve of doom, ere the fires of avenging Heaven were rained upon the Cities of the Plain. Such language is, alas! by no means uncommon now among the lower orders of the British people. You may hear it any Sunday evening in our crowded thoroughfares, uttered without even the grim and ghastly humour which fascinated Thibblethwaite and Bill Smithers, and caused old Stubbs to laugh, until his eyes, like those of "King Death" in the song, ran brine.

Yet these were worthy and respectable men of their class—not a quarter so bad as hundreds and thousands of their compeers. Thibblethwaite was a manly fellow enough, and a good husband to a comely young wife and a brace of brats. Bill Smithers was a kind-hearted, good-tempered fellow enough, much given to the music-hall style of entertainment and enjoyment; but what of that? We are speaking of England in the nineteenth century as it exists.

"I say, Thib," said Snap, poking his ungainly head out of his own particular den, "who do you think has just been here?"

"I was just going to tell him," said old Stubbs.

"Don't know," said that gentleman. "Old Mother Gilling, perhaps, begging as usual, as if she was likely to get anything back out of him," jerking his thumb in the direction of old Grinderby's room. "I actually gave the old girl sixpence myself the other day to get rid of her."

"Guess again," said Snap.

"That drunken vagabond Grimshaw, to see if he can get another writ out of the governor to serve. But once bit, twice shy, in that quarter."

"No," said Stubbs, "you're a long way from it."

"Well, who was it, then? Tell us."

"Why, young Mr. Edgar, who cut away from home ever so long ago, and who has become such a swell on the Press."

"What, is he coming back again?" asked Thibblethwaite, who saw the prospect of a future but distant partnership visibly darken before his prophetic gaze.

Old Stubbs shook his head.

"Ain't he a fool?" he said.

"Would I have been such a duffer?" quoth Snap.

"No, but you couldn't have got your living as he has," observed Mr. Thibblethwaite. "I dare say he don't make less than five hundred a-year. None so dusty that. I don't believe the old one would have given him as much to spend, if he'd worked his head off in this office."

"It's all very fine to talk of five hundred a-year," said Mr. Stubbs; "but there ain't many of them literary chaps that make that money regular. Do they ever leave anything when they die? Ain't folks always being called upon to take tickets for the benefit f their widows and children, at private theatricals and the like? Don't tell me of five hundred a-year. I don't believe they make three hundred regular, no, not one out of ten of 'em."

"Besides," said Snap, "couldn't he have waited,

until the governor hopped the twig, and then he could have done as he liked, and lived like a magnificent brick."

"Had a private skittle-ground with mahogany skittles, eh? like somebody said he should like to, if he was rich," said Thibblethwaite, "and married any barmaid in England."

"Not such a fool!" growled Snap, "if you mean me. I never said I'd marry any confounded woman."

"Hold your tongue, sir, or I'll punch your head. Do you think there are no women fit to marry; because you never knew a respectable gal?" said the chivalrous Thibblethwaite, who was thinking perhaps of his own wife at that moment, and so vindicated his manhood.

"What I was going to say," said Snap, "if you would let a fellow speak, was, that if Mr. Edgar had waited a year or two more, he might have fingered all the old boy's tin. I never saw any one look much worse than our governor's done latterly, and what's more, in a very short space of time."

"That's true enough," said Mr. Stubbs. "I've noticed he's lost flesh uncommon lately, and that's a bad sign at his time of life."

"It's thirty thousand pounds at the least, ah! I dare say fifty thousand pounds would be nigher the mark, thrown clean away into the street," resumed Snap, "and all to write a parcel of stuff in the newspapers, which nobody cares to read."

"Don't they?" said the common-law clerk. "*You*

don't, you mean. I shouldn't think it was much reading you troubled yourself with, except the police reports."

"Look at the public dinner they gave him on his return from, where was it?—Italy or Russia, or some such place," observed Mr. Stubbs. "I heard all about it from one of the short-hand writers at the Old Bailey. There was one hundred sat down in St. James's Hall, at a guinea a head, and the speeches they made were beautiful. Why there was a nobleman in the chair, the Earl of Pongo, who's a writer himself."

"And a precious reprobate he is to be in a chair anywhere out of Bedlam or Horsemonger-lane Gaol, if all tales are true," said the incorrigible Snap; in whom the bump of veneration was apparently decidedly small, and must have been beaten in by his mother's flat-iron during his interesting babyhood.

"Never mind," said Thibblethwaite, "a lord is a lord; and what's more, this one is a regular psalm-singing swell, and goes in for the tip-top respectable, and all that."

"Well," retorted Snap, "every one to his taste, as the old woman said when she kissed her cow, but for my part I wouldn't thank a parcel of rich fools for giving me a dinner, unless, indeed, they were to give it to me alone, and content themselves with looking on. A dinner is but a dinner, and they might as well give a feller a guinea at once. I could get eight at Stimpson's, for that price. What's the good of seeing a parcel of fellows feeding away like so many pigs in your honour, when they'd much better hand

you over the tin, or half of it, for that matter? It's nothing more than a testimonial to the landlord of the tavern—that's what it is. Of course, if you're rich, that's another thing, but when a cove is rich, he's a fool if he cares about such rubbish. He can always have dinners, as long as he can give 'em, at anybody's expense, and plenty of fine speeches, and flattery too; and as for testimonials, he can give himself one of them too, if he don't mind standing the loss on the plate. It's the way most of them are done. I tell you if a parcel of admirers was to give me a dinner at St. James's Hall, or anywhere else, I should grudge 'em every morsel they swallowed, that's what I should."

"Well," said Thibblethwaite, "if you ain't about the meanest, shabbiest-minded, most cantankerous little cure that ever I came across, may I never copy a declaration again. But there's deuced little chance of your ever getting a dinner, unless you should happen to be in a raffle for something handsome, and the winner had to stand a eighteenpenny blow-out to the whole boiling of unsuccessful blokes. And that wouldn't be exactly in your honour—would it, Stubbs?" appealing to that gentleman.

"I don't exactly see the probability of Mr. Snap being entertained by his friends," replied the old clerk.

"I see one way," quoth Thibblethwaite, musingly. "It strikes me, Snap, if you were to emigrate one of these days to Australia, or Nomansland, anywhere, I mean, far enough to avoid the probability of return, that those who know you might give a spread on the occasion. I am sure I should be ready for one, and

I think Stubbs here would take the chair and be eloquent — eh, old chap? Bill Smithers, I know, would take a ticket — he likes you so much — and favour us with his song of the 'Convict's Lament.' It was only last night he said, speaking of you, 'I do like that Snap, he is such an unmitigated little cad.'"

"You be hanged," said Snap. "You're always shoving your chaff into me. There isn't one of you in the office, as would have the pluck to do as I've done for the lot of you, not an hour agone, and this is what I get for it."

"What have you been and gone and done, eh, Snappy?" said his tormentor.

"Why, told old Grinderby," replied that gentleman, "that we want to leave off business at two o'clock on Saturdays, that you might get up the river earlier with your crew, that's what I've done, and I've given notice, or threatened to do it. But I know the governor ain't such a fool as to part with me, though he was in a way, I can tell you."

The artful Snap said nothing about the proposed increase of salary.

"Then you're a trump, Snappy," cried Thibblethwaite, giving him a thump on the back that brought tears into his eyes, "and you shan't be chaffed again; no, not this term, if I know it. It's all fun, you know."

"Fun or not, it hurts a fellow's feelings," whimpered Snap; "and I don't care if I do get turned away. I suppose it's because I'm not able to fight and stand up for myself. But I tell you I won't stand it any longer from Smithers, no, not if it costs

me five pounds, I won't. He'd better look out, though I am but a little un."

The idea of the valorous Snap punching Mr. Smithers, who was six feet one inch high, and had put on the gloves with Ben Caunt, was too much for Thibblethwaite, who laughed so immoderately, that he nearly choked himself, and declared he must have a glass of "pale," and would stand the expense of a similar debauch for Snap.

"And I'll tell you what it is, old fellow," he said, "if we get clear of the shop at two o'clock on Saturdays this summer, through your pluckiness, we'll give you a dinner at Crimini, or anywhere else you like, that we will, by ——!"

Saying which, the muscular Thibblethwaite grasped his small companion, and dragged him round the corner to a convenient "pub," whence the pair emanated a quarter of an hour after, with their spirits cheered, and feeling quite "bang up to the work," as the former elegantly remarked.

All this time, Mr. Grinderby sat, vainly trying to get through the business of the day. Say what he would, the desertion of his son was a terrible blow to the old lawyer. For a long time he had hugged the fond belief to his breast, that Edgar would come to him some day penniless, penitent, and out at the elbows, and ask him to make him as one of his hired clerks in the office. The calf had already bled in his imagination, that was to furnish the banquet on the occasion of the young man's return, and he had actually fixed upon the identical bin of old port (some bought in at Aubrey's sale), from which he would

take the wine to be drunk on that day of triumph. Scores of times had he emerged, in fancy, grimly smiling, from his cellar, with a crusted bottle in each trembling hand. He cherished that illusion no longer. As he read with a species of painful fascination the account of his son's successes in literature and journalism, he felt it as a record of so many disasters and reverses to himself. His chief hope and wish in life was crushed. What would he not have given to see Edgar, the hard, cynical, and worldly advocate, the legal Ahithophel, the forensic Pilate of the day, washing his hands of every prisoner's blood, every writhing litigant's loss, an eloquent human machine wound up with a golden key to stifle truth, and gild the specious lie; the accomplished modern counsel, without heart or conscience, ready to laugh at his own simulated emotion, so soon as a cause should be won, to mock justice with a sneer, and trump injustice with a jest.

Let not this be taken as our estimate of the Bar; it was merely Grinderby's enthusiastic aspiration of what his son should have been. Then his dismal old thoughts would revert to the lost letter again and again.

"Why did I not burn it?" he asked himself, "at once, as my habit is with such things. Why will idiots like that Manvers write such compromising trash? I have searched my pockets over twenty times, after I was sure it was not in them. Pooh! pooh! If I had dropped it anywhere, who is likely to be such a fool as to interest himself about that

beggar Aubrey's affairs? Let's see. I am to meet Manvers to-morrow evening at that dingy hole in Deptford. I don't much like the job, but it must be done, and then all will be smooth. How did he get that paragraph in the papers; for of course it was he? No one else can know. He has done it to terrify me into compliance with his greedy terms. Well, I will prepare a small deed of annuity payable in New York. This, and a sum down, will be the best way of settling the matter. It will keep him still in order; for if he spent the money, he might still annoy me, even without the legal proof in his hands. Besides, he may die. Curse the fellow! What brought him back here to trouble me? There is hemp enough in America—ay, and plenty of bowie-knives and Colt's revolvers. It is a great deal to pay to stop one mouth; but then look what I shall gain in return for it?" Mr. Grinderby at length concluded his work and rang the bell, which Snap answered.

"Have you finished those papers, Mr. Snap?" he asked, quite mildly.

"Not quite, sir," was the answer.

"Well then, you may finish them to-morrow morning. By-the-by, to-morrow is a half-holiday, on account of the general illumination. The office will be closed at two. We must have a little recreation sometimes, Mr. Snap. 'All work and no play,' you know the proverb. I've been thinking that you shall have the Saturday afternoons, as you desire it so much, and we must work an hour later, if requisite, on other days."

Mr. Snap's face expressed the most intense satisfaction.

"Thank you, sir," he said; "I am sure we are all much obliged. Good afternoon, sir."

"Good afternoon, Snap," repeated Grinderby, as the door closed upon his favourite clerk. "Useful fellow that. Musn't quarrel with him—can't quarrel with everybody. How that insolent brute of a coachman upset me to-day! I am not what I used to be."

Here a knock at the door was heard, and the boy entered with some letters and papers. Mr. Grinderby opened a newspaper, and after some time uttered an exclamation. "Eh? What is this? More wolves on my track. Curse them!" (Reads.) "'Legal *on dit*. The strong censure of the Lord Chief Justice lately pronounced on the conduct of a solicitor in Webb's Fields, *re* the affairs of a poor widow, will, it is said, lead to ulterior proceedings. His lordship, it will be remembered, regretted that the law had not been so violated that he could punish the cruelty and extortion of the solicitor in question, but hinted that he might be struck off the rolls!' What! I defy them to show I have done a single illegal act, in the case of that hag, Gilling. They can't do it, I say. A pretty pass, when the strict practice of the law is to be commented on thus. Ha! ha! They can prove and do nothing. I'll bring an action against the 'Evening Banner' for libel. But it's growing serious. Twenty years ago, I would have paid them to do it, and snapped my fingers at them all. It is time to retire from business. How disappointed that puppy Thib-

blethwaite will be. A half-holiday, indeed! I'll give them a whole holiday for ever, the ungrateful lot of them. There is not one worth his salt, save Snap, and I believe he would sell me for five pounds a-year more wages, the scoundrel. But I'll retire; and my daughter shall keep my house, and I'll see what they've all got to say against fifty thousand pounds, and the management of the Aubrey estate. Ha! that spasm again. I'll take a glass of wine, before I get into a 'bus." So saying, Mr. Grinderby unlocked a cupboard and poured himself out not one glassful but two, before taking his departure *en route* for Peckham, a thing most unusual for him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "ON REVIENT TOUJOURS," ETC.

I that have run in Pleasure's four-mile* heats,
That now am spavined, wind-galled, broken-kneed,
In double harness fain would slow jog on,
In sober course to dusty goal of life.
Then shall I yoke me to a mate unbroken,
Fresh, unsophisticate, some filly foal
Ta'en from the mother's side, untried, untamed,
And tameless too, perchance? Methinks such match
Must end in grief, by Nature unapproved.
They say reformed rakes make of mates the best;
Old saws, I rede you, stand not newest test.

*From "The Bloudie Wage Battel of Wimborne Minster; or, A Strange Damosel atte sore Shifte." Modernised from the MS. of Simon Hexham of Shaftesbury in Dorset.* 1593.

THAT we do not entirely believe in the motto which we have chosen for the heading of this chapter, it is perhaps superfluous to observe. We rather incline towards the philosophy of Master Simon Hexham expressed in the above lines. But the exception which justifies so many proverbial sayings, will serve our turn. If a man returned to his calf-love, he must possess the recipe of Medea, and be able not only

* It need scarcely be mentioned that this line is a mere paraphrase. The original is too coarse to be literally rendered.

to renovate himself, but also the beloved object of his early adoration. A man may cherish his first love to the end, but then he never relinquishes it. The cure of love is perfect. It does not linger in the system, to break out in old age again. Therefore is the Frenchman wrong, though his saying is none the less pretty, amiable, and acceptable, for all that. Nonsense is sometimes much more agreeable, and, were we not afraid of uttering a paradox, we should say, sometimes more sensible than sense. There are even some tinsel sentiments which pass current always, and are stamped with so artistic a die, that we esteem them more than the commonplace coin with the true metallic ring of gold.

Sir Harry Luckless had become "bien rangé" since we last saw anything of that careless, but not unprincipled libertine. Really, some good-for-nothing persons are so much better, so much more estimable and loveable, than some very good and proper members of society, that we are sometimes inclined to consider whether the supreme justice of the next world will not reverse nearly all the judgments and verdicts of mankind pronounced in this. That it will do so to some extent, we have very little doubt. A glowing epitaph may prove quite a drawback to salvation in most cases; and a tombstone recording the virtues of some successful hypocrite turn to a heavy millstone round the neck of that unfortunate person, whose excellent qualities are so eloquently inscribed thereon. The bland, passionate, and religious Lady Jones whose merits were summed up by the statement that she "also painted in water-colours, and of

such is the Kingdom of Heaven," may find that her somewhat inconsecutive but gushing panegyrist made one mistake, and that the most important one, in his summing up of her good qualities and their desert. Nothing is more sublime than the coolness of human assurance with which we book our departed friends, relatives, or acquaintances, for redemption. To us there is something very awful in these mock passports; this familiar recommendation to Heaven. With regard to the easy, passing verdicts of the world, let us imagine a case. We see a man tall, gaunt, and haggard, enter a garret where a consumptive woman is stretched on the bare boards, and two children with still lovely hair and eyes gaze wildly on him, and, shivering, implore their father for food. He has none to give. A year ago, he was a prosperous man; but he intrusted his affairs to a lawyer and was stripped of all. He has seen those once plump darlings grow thinner day by day. They prattled to him at first of the altered circumstances which surrounded them, whilst a lump in his throat would nearly choke him as he gazed at them, and hot tears rolled down his cheeks as he turned away. Then came the next phase of stern distress, and then the mute suffering of the darlings whom he loved, that unhappy man; loved with the inexpressible yearnings of a father's heart. His wife, his partner, his consoler, has faded; until it seems a ghost that silently parts from him and receives him in silence with bloodless lips and big staring eyes. He seeks work, but finds none; and the rain wets him, till rheumatism racks his joints. He has pawned everything

that he *can* pawn, as the winter brings holly and Christmas to the well-fed and prosperous—his own vest, his wife's under-clothing, the children's little frocks. He has pawned his razors long ago, and his beard grows stubbly and wild. One night his misery culminates. He fears, lest one of his children may die, ere the morn arrive; and if that it arrive, it will bring no hope. He is not drunk, but grief has mounted to his head and made him mad. So he clenches his fist, and rushes forth like a wild-beast to get food for his little ones and their dam by means of his fierceness and strength. He meets the man who has robbed him, he seizes him by the throat. The man has a pocket-book, money in notes and gold, a thousand pounds and more. The garotter has torn it from the respectable robber's grasp, when a policeman fells him in his turn to the ground. A crowd assembles. Justice and Law are triumphant. Who pities the garotter?—none! Who does not sympathise with and congratulate the elderly gentleman, whom the ruffian knocked down and so nearly succeeded in plundering? Read the papers the next day, read the trial and sentence of the offender. He is ordered to be flogged, and a leading article appears rejoicing in so wholesome an example, so reassuring and agreeable a fact. In the mean time a coroner's inquest has been held on the wife and one child, and the other little dazed atomy lingers in the workhouse, where it is Heaven's own mercy if she dies. The true spoliator and robber rewards the policeman with half a crown; conduct rather shabby, but prudent and wise. Besides, can he not afford to be mean?

The policeman only did his duty, and is paid for doing it. Were there no future world, one had better be a clawless crab in mid-ocean, or an atomic monster about to be swallowed by a less infinitesimal monster, the pieuvre of a rain-drop, than even witness such irrational tortures in beings of a larger and completer growth. And in that future world, how will these things be adjusted and paid?

Sir Harry Luckless was not by any means a bad man. He had never deserted a woman, nor deceived a friend. Through life we have found that he who is capable of acting falsely to a woman, would do so to a man, if he dared. The gay fellow, your unscrupulous Lothario, who promises marriage, maintenance, or uses any other deceit to a confiding girl, would steal his friend's bank-notes or diamond breast-pin, if he were not afraid of the consequences. Sir Harry was not one of these; but he had spent, lavished, or lost the greater part of his fortune, and being poor as well as having been fast, was looked upon as a very bad fellow indeed.

The truth is, Sir Harry had pulled up, ere it was quite too late. He had still a few, a very few thousands left, still a little corner of his once large estates bringing him in some four hundred pounds a-year. He had come to "know the world" rather late in life—the best dispositions naturally do. An old head on young shoulders is often index to a bad heart. Sir Harry was sick of London, sick of Society, weary of the empty round of fashionable pleasures. But not being intellectual, nor even fond of reading, he had no resource in himself. He could not afford to

hunt any longer, and he could not shoot all the year round. So Sir Harry was not altogether happy, and had a great desire to emigrate, being divided between the "diggings" of California and a sheep-walk in Australia. The latter had the preference in his heart. Sir Harry's thoughts often reverted to Kitty Dareall. He had never loved any one half so much; nay, he had never loved any one else at all. He was one of the very few persons aware of the true nature of her relations with the Duke of Chalkstoneville. But he had never sought to see her since the duke's death. We verily believe that but for the large sum which Kitty inherited, Sir Harry would never have rested, till he had found her out, and made her an offer of his heart and hand. But he was too proud and sensitive to seek her now that she had become rich, and from such a source.

"It's all very well for me to know that there was no harm between them, but look what fellows would say," said Sir Harry, very truly, to himself; and yet his thoughts would frequently of late shape themselves into some such train of reflection as the following, in which he is now indulging as he saunters down Bond-street.

"Poor dear Kitty! How I have missed her! I used to fancy that I adored that cold and beautiful creature, Mrs. Aubrey, at whose rescue I assisted nearly the last time I saw Kitty. I wonder what has become of Mrs. Aubrey, and that husband of hers too. Let me see, it was about a week or so after the attempted suicide, that Kitty came to see me, and laying her hand upon my shoulder, said,

'Harry, you have a good heart, will you keep a secret?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I will do anything for you, Kitty.' I think I see her smile now, as she said, 'Why, I thought you were in raptures about some one else?' And I replied, 'I never loved any one half as much as I do you.' 'Would you marry me?' she exclaimed, quite suddenly. '*Marry* you?' said I. 'Kitty, what would the world say?' She burst out laughing, and asked me if I thought she was in earnest; but it was not her usual merry laugh, and I fancied she seemed very sad and preoccupied afterwards. I have kept her secret well, though I often longed at first to tell Aubrey that his wife was living. I never saw Kitty but once again, and that was to ask me to push the fortunes of some Polish or Hungarian opera-singer; the very same who appeared on Saturday night, was it, or Thursday last, for the first time in London? What a fool I was to throw my chance away! The 'world!' what do I care for the world? I wish I had married Kitty; for if a man can't be happy without a woman, what's the use of arguing the point? She was never a twentieth part so bad at any time as people said of her, and I've never seen such another. Confound the world! What will it do for any one? Flatter him when he is rich, and abuse him when he is poor; but never make him happy, or fill a vacant space in his home or heart. After all, what right has a fellow, who has led such a life as I have done, to be so very particular? She was good enough for me; and those who did not care to visit her might have stayed

away. I am sure Mrs. Filmer Dawson would have recognised her, and that dear Lady Tredarno."

Thinking thus, Sir Harry actually ran against a lady deeply veiled, who came suddenly round a corner on the very day of the events which we have recorded in the last chapter as having occurred at Mr. Grinderby's office. Sir Harry took his hat off, and made a sincere and gentlemanly apology. Both he and Aubrey were of that order of men, who always respect a woman; if old, on account perhaps of the memory of their mother; if young and handsome, from natural gallantry; if plain, from chivalrous respect to womankind; if poor, because perhaps they have hearts attuned to an old chivalric air of the Middle Ages. We must say this even of Aubrey with all his faults: he never even repulsed any wretched castaway in the streets, save with gentleness and courtesy. And rare, indeed, it is, even when the most abandoned creature does not appreciate the sad reproof conveyed in such a style and tone far more readily than she will yield to the repugnant snuffle of the "Saint," or the brutal rebuff of the stern and Pharisaical, or heartless and profligate man. In this case, there was nothing remarkable in Sir Harry's courtesy; for the veiled lady had an elegant tournure, and apparently faultless form. Whoever she was she hesitated, drew back, and then in sweet and silvery accents pronounced his name.

"Sir Harry Luckless!" she said.

"That's my name," he replied. "That voice. Is it possible?"

The lady flung back her veil, and disclosed the features of Kitty Dareall, a little paler, but perhaps more refined and enchanting than ever.

"Am I much changed, Harry?" she asked.

"Oh! Kitty! Kitty!" was the reply. "I was thinking of you at that moment, indeed I was. But that's not strange, since I'm always thinking of you."

"Indeed!" she said. "And can Sir Harry Luckless be so constant to any one thought? I could not pass you without speaking. And, indeed, I am very glad to have met you, for I want you to do me a favour."

"Anything, anything in the world," replied Sir Harry.

"Nay," said Kitty, with something like a show of her former gaiety; "it is nothing very dreadful, no mighty proof of devotion, Sir Knight."

"Kitty! dear Kitty!" said Sir Harry, very earnestly, "I have met you, thank Heaven, just in time. I have determined to go abroad, to emigrate, to leave England probably for ever. Will you be mine? Will you marry me and go with me? I have just sufficient fortune left. But I forgot, you are rich now, and——"

"That," said Kitty, interrupting him, "is nothing, and might easily be got over. I could, and probably should, give the greater part of my fortune away."

"Do! do!" cried Sir Harry; "that will remove every obstacle. It has only been that which has prevented my seeking you these three years past."

"There are other obstacles," replied Kitty, gravely. "The duties I have to perform."

"What better duty," cried Luckless, "can you have than to look after a poor fellow like me? You won't go away again, will you, Kitty. Where are you staying? Tell me everything, my own dear, dear Kitty!"

"Hush!" she replied, mournfully, but not angrily; "you must not talk like that, or we shall not meet again. And now I will tell you what I want. It is your escort to the Opera to-môrrow night. You know who sings, the incomparable Bianca Stellini, the new soprano. Come, you kept a secret for me admirably once. I will intrust you with another. Do you know who she is?"

"Who she is?" said Sir Harry. "Who she is? How should I? I have been told she is not an Italian; but a Hungarian, or some such thing. But I've heard nothing particular about her."

"Can't you guess?" asked Kitty.

Sir Harry pondered. "How can I?" he said. "Besides, I don't know anything now; I'm quite out of the old set."

"A woman would have divined it long ago," resumed Kitty.

"The Luckless family were never good at riddles," replied Sir Harry; "and you always said I was remarkably stupid, you know. But come, tell me; I can't say I should feel much interest, if it were not you who ask me."

"What do you think, then, when I tell you that

Bianca Stellini, the famous singer, is no other than Mrs. Aubrey?"

"What!" cried Sir Harry. "Impossible! But Mrs. Aubrey is an Englishwoman."

"Well," said Kitty, "and haven't you heard of an Irishman being a Turk, ere now, and even a Chinese, and I don't know what besides?"

"You have astonished me!" cried Sir Harry. "And doesn't everybody know her?"

"Scarcely a soul. You wouldn't have known her to-night, if I hadn't told you. Lady Madeiraville, who was at Rome, when she was studying there, knows, and so of course does her husband, and two or three more, but that is all."

"And have you spoken to her yet?" asked Sir Harry.

"No," said Kitty, "I have not. I have seen her; but only at a distance."

"She has not cut you," cried Sir Harry, indignantly, "after all that you did?—I mean, she is not ungrateful, I hope?"

"No," replied Kitty; "it is not her fault that we have not met. Our paths in life are different. But I mean to see her and hear her too to-morrow night, and I want you to accompany me. I want to be with some one to whom I can speak of her. You will oblige me, will you not? Take a private box, and do not put it off, as you used to do, till the last moment, or I shall be disappointed indeed. Let it be tolerably near the stage, and on the second tier."

"I will go at once," said Sir Harry; "but tell me where shall we meet?"

"To-morrow evening at a quarter to eight," answered Kitty, "I will be here in a brougham. But, before you go, I want most earnestly to ask you a question. Do you know what has become of her husband, Aubrey?"

"No, indeed, I don't," was the answer. "I haven't seen him; no, not since I saw you the last time but one, the night she was rescued. I heard of him a few times, but not for long. He was sold up, and became an author, which is more than I could have done. Stingray said he met him in great distress somewhere and relieved his necessities; but you know what a one he is to make the most of a spiteful tale."

"Indeed I do!" said Kitty. "If you can learn anything about Aubrey, pray do. I kept him in sight for a short time, and sent him some small sums anonymously on two or three occasions. But I lost sight of him all at once. I fear the worst; I fear that he is dead, a prey perhaps to remorse and to want."

"I hope not!" cried Sir Harry. "Especially if you think there would be any chance of a reconciliation; for I suppose that is what you want to see, with your good, kind heart. Dear, dear Kitty! how I love you."

"If you talk like this, Harry, I won't come to-morrow evening," said Kitty.

"How this dress becomes you," said Sir Harry

"It is not much like that I last saw you in. I remember everything you wore, even to the very ribbon on your dear little head."

"Well, dear Harry!" she replied, "I will wear that very dress once more, to-morrow night. Be punctual! And now, adieu!"

"Punctual, indeed!" quoth Sir Harry. "Punctual! And will you be sure, quite certain to come? And if I shouldn't see you to-morrow, will you not tell me where you live, where I may call, or even write?"

"I shall be sure to come, if I am alive and well," said Kitty; "and if anything did prevent me, I would write to you to your club. There, go and get the box. Farewell till to-morrow, Harry!"

"You will be sure to come?" quoth Sir Harry once more, raising her hand towards his lips.

"Go!" she said.

He raised his hat and parted from her. He walked towards the Opera House, like a man in a dream, and very nearly left the box-office without waiting for change for a twenty-pound note.

"He loves me truly," said Kitty to herself, as she pursued her way alone, once more deeply veiled, and bent on some charitable aim. "He loves me truly. Would that I might reward such affection! Reward it? Would it be a reward? Would it be true and just in one like me to bear his honourable name? Yet he of all living men knows most of my unhappy history—the best and the worst! Four years ago, had he asked me, 'twould have been different; and what might we be now—happy, or most unhappy—

who knows? I never could have borne a reproach; the slightest coldness, even imagined on my part, the very superficial coolness into which married life will naturally resolve itself, even when deep and tender regard is only deeper and firmer, because it is undemonstrative and unseen, would have pierced my bosom with continual thorns. No, it cannot be, must not be, shall not be! One more night of apparent gaiety, one more glimpse at the world of fashion and frivolity, one more visit to the Opera, that scene of splendour, where the senses are dazzled by sight and sound, where all that wealth and art can furnish to fascinate the brain and heart will thrill through every fibre of my being, in companionship with him whom I love! It is a dangerous trial; but shall I shrink from it? No; it is thus that I will rebuke and chastise my soul. I will dare it this once. I must and will see her, her to whom I owe redemption, if I am to be redeemed. I must see her in her triumph, her glory, her radiance. It is at once an indulgence and a trial. I will surrender myself to the enchantment; I will enjoy, brave, suffer all, and then break the spell, and clasp the penance to my breast—cost what it may—but this once, only this once. Heaven requires not a repeated martyrdom, even from one such as I am. It must be the first, last, only time; and then I will return to the life I have appointed myself, the duties I have undertaken, again. Yet I wish—no! I will not be weak enough to wish I had not met him; for if I need it, I can and will pray for strength."

Poor Kate! We shall see if thy exalted enthu-

siasm will suffice to carry thee on in the narrow and thorny path which thou hast chosen, unconquered not only by the pomps and vanities of the world, but by the affections of the heart, the yearnings of a requited love, and all that could make earth to thee a foretaste of the forgiveness of Heaven!

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MR. STINGRAY'S RAPTURES.

The veriest pretender who has had wit enough to secure a tow-rope in the wake of the great steam-ship, "Public Opinion," on the Ocean of Life, may deride the best efforts of the independent master-mariner to buffet with the adverse winds and stormy billows which retard his onward career, even if they do not swamp him altogether, and drown his hopes, fortunes, and existence in the vortex of untimely fate.—*Dr. Blokeham's* "*Essay on Success*," chap. v.

And what was Blanche thinking and doing? Had her sense of injury been softened by the knowledge which had reached her of Aubrey's terrible trials and humiliation? Undoubtedly it had; but scarcely to such a point, as to wish for a reconciliation with her husband. Pity, a deep interest in his fate and welfare, she undoubtedly felt; but she had really never proposed to herself such a thing as a reunion. Once or twice, when the subject had been tenderly and delicately approached by Violet and Susan, she had thought of it; but it was with a shiver of repugnance, a sensation of something almost approaching to horror and aversion. Not even, when she clasped her boy to her breast, and saw in his eyes and features the childish image of her erring and lost husband, did

she ever feel a return of her old devotion, a pang of the love that was indeed dead within her. At times the insult, the neglect, the cruelty seemed as fresh as ever. She had corresponded with Kitty occasionally; but never alluded to Aubrey in her letters. Did she know who Kitty really was? Had she ever learnt that her benefactress had been the guiltless cause of her misery? We are inclined to think not. The Signora's appearance in London had been a tremendous success. Of course, it could not fail to be so, barring accidents, such as a break-down from overwrought feelings, coming accredited, as she did to John Bull, from the land of song, from Rome, Milan, Florence, and even from St. Petersburg. Had the musical portion of the British public been disappointed in her, the unmusical, and by far larger portion, who go to the Opera, because it's *the* thing to do, would have carried her through rapturously. But the fact is, she was a great *artiste*, and on her first appearance at Her Majesty's she outdid herself. It was delightful to hear Stingray, as if he were some inflated old German music-master, and she his only daughter. He affected to decline all invitations upon Opera nights. He said that he shut his eyes, and could have believed that "our dear gifted Malibran" were alive again.

"To see and hear such a woman was," he said, "his glory as a man, but his shame as an Englishman. For how immeasurably below her are our countrywomen, not only in voice but in dramatic art!"

This he said to Lady Madeiraville, who began innocently enough to think him a bit of a humbug.

But Stingray was determined to be enthusiastic—he felt it was safe and right—and enthusiastic he was. So he ran about like an old rogue elephant trumpeting her praise.

Amongst her most devoted admirers, too, was our friend the artist, whom our readers may remember "on the prowl" with Stingray and Sir Harry at an earlier date in our narrative. He was perfectly ecstatic in bad Italian, and reminiscences of Rome. He had latterly gone in for being a young old fellow, instead of an old young fellow, and took especial pride in the silvery whiteness of his hair and moustache. He had grown louder and more gushing than ever. He did not witness the début of the Signora; but he went in evening costume to the crushing-room and said he had done so. He read all the critiques of the journals to enable him to talk unreservedly of her performance.

"I didn't see you," said an acquaintance. "Were you in the pit?"

"Not I," was the answer. "I was in a private box with a lady, a musical friend, a charming little creature, who says she adores me. Aw! I pretend to believe her. It's the best thing to do, eh? I knew her—aw!—in Rome!"

The other stared at him, and turned on his heel.

In the midst of her triumphs, the Signora instituted every possible inquiry through Edgar Leslie to find out what had become of her husband, in whose death she persistently refused to believe. "All that I wish is," she said, "to place him in comfort, if he be in want; of course anonymously, for his sake and for

mine. For myself, I only hope that we may not meet again; and if I know him, he would sooner die than receive aid at my hands."

As we have seen she had allowed Susan, with some little hesitation and difficulty, to impart her secret to Tops, and promised very shortly to grace their wedding with her presence. In acceding to this, she thought it might be of assistance in finding out the whereabouts of Aubrey, and she expressed great delight, when she heard that the Downy had turned up, and looked forward to an interview with that facetious individual with no little eagerness. From Kitty she had heard nothing since her arrival in England, and was expecting a communication from her protectress, as she called her, with the utmost anxiety.

On the Monday evening, a note was placed in her hands. It was brief and laconic.

"ESTEEMED MADAM!" it ran, "I shall see you and hear you, D. V., to-morrow night, and in a few days will ask for an interview before bidding you an eternal adieu, to congratulate you on your glorious success, to tell you some things which I think you ought to hear, and perhaps to ask a great favour. Till then, adieu! Remember me in your prayers.

"THE SISTER CATHERINE."

"Who can she be?" said Leslie to Violet. "Some noble Catholic lady devoted to good works. Real, substantial, and yet romantic charity — the most 'Catholic' devotion to good deeds. Holy living, in

its best and purest sense, is one thing in which I must say I think the religion of Luther is in some few instances surpassed by that of Rome. There is one other thing too," he said. "There is not in God's house that odious distinction made between the rich and the poor, which often puts a Christian church on a par with a mere place of secular amusement. But, oh! the hideous evil of the rest, as I have seen it in Italy and in Spain."

"It is very singular," said Violet. "I have asked Blanche over and over again, if she could remember anything which gave a clue to this mysterious being. She declares she can remember nothing, except that once, when she was recovering from a fainting fit, she talked quite familiarly of dukes and duchesses and lords. I hope we shall be allowed to see her, when she does make her appearance—don't you?"

"I am not usually very curious," replied Leslie; "but I confess, in this case, I am most anxious to meet this benevolent being, so interesting and, as I learn, so comparatively young. I wonder how she arrays herself, and whether she wears a huge white head-dress and black dress, and carries a large rosary and bunch of keys at her waist."

"I declare," said Violet, "I don't know, but that I shall feel a little jealous of her."

They both laughed heartily at this idea.

"What mischief are you plotting, you young folks?" said the Signora, approaching them from the next room.

Violet told her without reserve what she had said to cause their mirth.

A shade passed over the Signora's face; but she looked at them indulgently and said:

"Laugh away at your own young fancies, and may you always be light-hearted as now. I know you could not turn suffering into a jest; so may your mirth never be changed into grieving over the world's injustice and your own untoward fate. The lady to whom you have alluded is not only one of the best, but, I fear, unhappiest of beings. I trust she will allow me to make her known to those whom I love. Ah! my child," running her hand through Violet's hair; "even you do not know all my sad history, nor what this mysterious woman who has roused mirthful images in your thoughts has done for me. Suffice it to say that I owe her more than life—the desire to live—perhaps the mercy and forgiveness of Heaven."

"Forgive our thoughtlessness, dear lady," said Edgar; "we were picturing to ourselves a solemn Sister of Charity of the Bromptonian order. It was mere foolish talk. We meant no harm. I am, indeed, sorry for it; since we have hurt your feelings thus."

"Nay," replied the Signora. "It is I who am wrong. I forgot, at first, that you did know all the circumstances attending my acquaintance with this lady, this extraordinary being, to whom I, to whom we all, owe so much. Were it not for her, what might have become of this dear child? You, at any rate, would probably never have known her. See, Edgar, what you too owe to the Sister Catherine, as she calls herself."

"All the happiness of my life," murmured Edgar. "How I long to meet this good fairy, or rather this noble woman; and to press her hand with affectionate respect, and to tell her all that I owe her."

"And I, too," said Violet, "who owe her happiness—perhaps life; for you tell me," turning to the Signora, "that I should not have met you, save for her."

"She ought now to be happy," rejoined the Signora; "if the happiness and blessings of others have any effect." And she smiled affectionately, as she regarded those two young lovers, and then turned away and sighed! Was she thinking of her own brief and happy days of courtship at Lady Courcy's? We imagine that she was. She was not an angel, but a woman with a great sorrow, which had lately been wakened up in her heart.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## A HANDFUL OF TENPENNY NAILS.

"They thought he'd gone out of town, you see, and he hadn't, that's all; and no one came anigh the place, at least them as did didn't think anythink of findin' his door closed, he was a man of sech very independent habits. Well, after about three months, leastways ten weeks on the Friday after he was first missed, the clerks in the office below began to complain of a gamey smell. At last they declared they couldn't stand that game no longer, so they sent a depytation to the Steward. After some inquiries and a good deal of sniffing on the stairs, the Inn sent for a locksmith to break open his door. There they found him, sure enough, a-lying all among his papers, and the bills as he'd bin a discountin' of. They was most of 'em overdue, afore he was found; but them as had given 'em didn't seem to have troubled much to find him, with the exception at first of two or three as wanted renewals. There was one come the next day, as see it in the newspapers, and said it was his salvation. He didn't seem to care in the least about the smell; but asked if the deceased had left any will or executioners. I told him as there was none found yet; and he said there was a Providence in 'Eaven. 'Yes, sir,' says I, 'but, begging your pardon, I don't think that's exactly the direction of him as is gone.' 'You've about hit it, Mrs. What's-your-name,' says he, and I never see a gent larf so hearty. 'My name is Patty Priggins,' says I, 'at your sarvice,' for I can't abear being called out of my name. 'You can larf as much as you please, sir; but wherever he's went to, as is gone—which it don't sinnify a pin's pint to us as is left, and why should it?—he's took with him four shillings a-week from a fammerly of nine children, as is down with measles and hooping-cough at this very minnit, and no one ain't very likely to take these chambers agen, which is what the unfortynite creeter might a thought of afore he was took so bad, if he'd 'ad a spark of feeling.' 'You don't mean to say that, Mrs. Priggumbob,' he answered; and gave me half a sovereign, and bolted so sudden that I hadn't time even to thank him, much less ask his name. I heard afterwards he was an Irish barrinet, and it's my opinion that he was down very heavy in them bills. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody any

good, and the chambers was painted and let soon after, and I got six shillings a-week to do for the gent as took 'em, besides perkisites. So I hadn't much reason to complain of the orfully sudden death in chambers, as the newspapers call it. Drat it, we must all die some time, as well as live."—*Gossip of Webb's Fields.*

"MORNIN', mate!" quoth the Downy to Tops, as he met that individual and his betrothed at the early hour of eight A.M., the day after, by appointment at a handy little public, in Maddox-street, Regent-street. "My sarvice to you, Mrs. Susan!" and he made a most elaborate bow.

"You've grown very polite lately, Mr. Downy," remarked that lady.

"Vy," rejoined that individual, "I've bin over in Paris, not so werry long since neither, along vith some 'osses for the Hemperor. Didn't I tell yer of it?"

"Well, I believe you did," said Susan, "but I own that I forgot it when I spoke."

"To business," said Tops, "as soon as you two have done with your fine speeches. What shall it be, Mr. Downy?"

"Vell!" replied the Downy, "I'm for a drop of cow's juice and 'arf a kevarten o' old Tom."

"And I'll take a glass of pale, miss, if you please. No, stop! I'll have threepennorth of brandy and a little cold water."

These preliminaries being settled, the party sat down in a cosey little corner, while the barmaid continued her operations of cleaning up preparatory to the day's business.

"Now then," asked Tops, "have you squared it with Mr. Lanner?"

"Right as nails," was the answer.

"And the settling day?" continued Tops.

"This werry evenin', a course, cos of the appintment in the letter. I say, ha! ha! jest look here!" And he pulled out half a dozen tenpenny nails from his pocket.

"Whatever are those for, Mr. Downy?" inquired Susan.

"You see, Mr. Lanner he says that he don't vant the lievyer there at all. He says ve can polish hoff vun on 'em better nor two. Besides, it's Mr. Leslie's hopinion, him as has 'ad the manedgement of your lady's affairs. He see Lanner hisself, last night."

"I see," said Susan. "It's quite right. I know all about it. They don't want to mix Mr. Grinderby up, any more than they can help in the matter."

"At hall ewents," said the Downy, "the hinspector, he says, 'You vant to nail that 'ere vill, don't yer? and I vant to nail this 'ere Manvers,' says he, 'and I don't vant no onnecessary trouble about the matter.' Vell, ve are to go to the rendywoo kvite permiscuous, togged out so that our own mothers vouldn't know us, that is, t'others' mothers, and not mine; for it vould 'ave puzzled her to know me at hany time, considerin' I never 'ad the honner of her acquaintance, since I wos born. Vell, the game wos to hinder old Grinderby from comin'; and Lanner, he axed me hif I could put him hup to any vay of stoppin' hup his earth. Vell, I considered a bit, and then I hit it hoff, and Lanner, he larfed so 'arty, I thort he'd 'av bust."

"And whatever is it?" asked Tops. "It hasn't

anything to do with my upsetting of him, I hope. Besides, I turned him up last night. I ain't any longer in his sarvice; and so I couldn't do it if I would, which I'm altogether doubtful if I could ever have made up my mind to it at all."

"Don't you fret," said the Downy. "You've got nothink to do vith it at hall. It's my plant haltogether, and I flatters myself it's reyther neat, and werry creditable to my hancestry."

"I can't see," said Tops, "unless you or some one else'll knock him down on the road, or take him into custody, as if he was an hindependent elector going to record his vote in a free country, how you are to stop him from going to the rendyvoo."

"Can't yer?" said the Downy. "Then I can, that's all. You see these nails, don't yer?"

"Well, they're big enough," returned Tops, "any how."

"I've bin a gimbletin' of old Grinderby's horfice-door this werry mornin.' Fust of hall, I was agoin' to lock him in; but ve thought if he hollered and the laundress come vith the key, as in course she vould, he might get out afore he wos vanted. That's all. Now d'yer twig?"

"But supposing," said Tops, "that any of the limbs of Satan—I mean the clerks—is there?"

"Didn't you yourself tell me yesterday as he's agoin' to give 'm a half hollerday this werry arternoon on account of the general flare-up to-night?"

"But suppose he shouldn't remain there himself," suggested Susan.

"Squared," returned the Downy. "Squared agen.

We've written a letter on the special makin' an appointment at four o'clock, and the job'll be done at three and a 'arf."

"I hope you've not had a hand in writing it, Mr. Downy," said Susan, laughing.

"Considerin' as writin' wos a part of my edicashun as wos left out by partickler rekvest," replied that gentleman, "I considers your perlite remark as good as hanswered. Mr. Lanner did that part of the job at my sur-jest-shun, and borrered a seal as big as a young cheese-plate from a Government horfice."

"But suppose you should be nailed and locked up instead, which you will be, if you're caught doing any such a job?" asked Mr. Tops.

The Downy assumed an air of mild pity and patronising rebuke.

"If I'm caught," he said, "I'll send to you for bail; but don't stop at home a purpose. In the fust place, I'm agoin' togged as a carpenter, vith a paper cap and apron, and a basket o' tools. Them there stairs in the Fields is jest suitable for sech a game. Hif any one should come by, vy I jest moves hup to another floor. Hall I vants now is a pot o' paint, the werry blackest paint as I can get. Lend us a bob, mate, vill yer, to get it, for the hinspector he von't come down vith nothin' aforehand. A course I knows vy. He's afeard I should 'ave a drop. He don't know me, and I don't vant to cause him any onnecessary alarm. Yer see he ain't po-eticle, ain't the capting, and don't make no hallowance for the little hamiable veaknesses of natur."

"Here you are," said Tops. "But hang me if I know what you're going to be up to with that paint."

"You'll know fast enough," was the reply, "ven you or your missus here 'as wrote me a letter has I vants to slip into old Grinderby's box, ven I've done the trick. I say, miss," to the barmaid, "vill you oblige this lady vith a sheet of note-paper and a pen and ink?"

The young lady immediately busied herself in getting the materials ready.

"Ha! ha!" cried Tops, who began to relish the business. "I'll tell you what it is. If you do this successful, you deserve an annuity for life, like the great Mr. Sayers, and that's the only thing that would suit your complaint. And what's more, if I know anything, you'll get it. If we could only find Mr. Arthur now!"

"You'll drop on him safe enough," said the Downy; "and afore long, I reckon."

Tops shook his head. "I only hope it is as you say; but I'm afraid you were mistaken in thinking you've seen him."

"You be blowed," was the elegant response. "Do you think I'm a fool? I don't wear a heye-glass, do I?"

"Well," said Tops, "we'll find him if he is alive. Let's advertise in Austrely."

"Better advertise here first," said Susan.

"You was always a little jibber and bolter, Sue. It's my opinion he's in Austrely. But we'll try both. Now then for the letter."

Susan sat down to write, and the Downy, with

many apologies, lit a pipe, which he declared was always the practice of the Great Napoleon, when dictating his despatches.

"There's many things they don't put into books," he said; "but I heerd it from a soger as see him a-writin' his letters on a hair trunk in the Vest Injies."

"I didn't know he was ever there," ventured Susan.

"Vell," said the Downy, "arter that, wot's the use of hargymint?"

"Come," said Tops, "we are losing time. Let's have another drain and then fire away."

"No," said the Downy. "I don't vet t'other eye this mornin'. I knows what that leads to."

"Depend upon it," said Susan, "that the Great Napoleon didn't drink in the morning."

"If he did," said the Downy, "'twas afore the Battle of Vaterloo, vich was the first time his nerves wanted settlin'."

"I'm longing to know," quoth Tops, "whatever it is you want that pot of paint for. I should like to write something on his door myself when he's locked in."

"And what might that be?" asked Susan.

"'Gone to Westminster,' my dear," replied her lover; "which is what the young lawyers in the Temple do when they're engaged very partickler indeed—a muslin consultation, my love, as I once heard Mr. Stingray call it."

"Go along with you, with your nonsense," said

Susan, disengaging herself from Mr. Tops's arm, which he had managed to insinuate round her waist.

Under this rebuff, Tops amused himself, during the barmaid's temporary absence, by taking off his livery coat, and kicking it into the air. "This old huniform," he exclaimed, "were a killing me by inches. Come drive on, mate, will yer?"

As dictating and writing the letter of the Downy was a somewhat lengthy operation, which did eventually necessitate "wetting the other eye," for the good of the house, as Tops declared, we will leave the parties to compose and put it on paper after their own fashion, the more especially, as our readers will have the opportunity of knowing its contents in a future chapter.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE OLD FOX HAS HIS EARTH STOPPED.

"What an incorrect title to a chapter! Don't you know the Fox is outside when his earth is stopped, and you have placed the lawyer inside his hole? I should alter that if I were you." "Don't you see," we replied, "that in the first place this is a Cockney tale, and not a tale of a Fox in a sporting novel by the inimitable Mr. Jorrocks, or whoever is the author of 'Mr. Soapy Sponge's Tour.' Besides, we like the title—it has a good smack or sound. It is meant to be suggestive, rather than technically correct. Again, we are not about to hunt our Fox, but to keep him out of the poultry-yard for a single night. Finally, we don't choose to alter it."—*Ourselves.*

"It's very odd," said Mr. Grinderby, as he sat completing a private letter which he did not intend his clerks to copy, "whatever can that knocking be at this hour? Hem!" (writing) "'Our client—is not—disposed—to give—any—more—time.' Considering 'our client' is myself, I don't think there is any mistake as to the fact. That will do. 'We are—dear sir—yours faithfully—Grinderby and Grinderby.' I wish it *was* Grinderby and Grinderby, as I meant it to be for a time, at least till that wretched boy was called to the Bar; but he chose to be a penny-a-liner instead. Well, let him rue it, let him rue it," added the old lawyer, fiercely. "Let me see, 'yours faith-

fully'—um, um—that will do. I can get execution against him—say Thursday week. His furniture is well worth all the debt and expenses, even at the broker's price. Why should I wait till he can realise? I should then barely get back my money and a paltry ten per cent. I have done pretty well, though. I gave him a fortnight, for twenty-five pounds down. That was whilst I ascertained the value of the furniture, and searched 'Stubbs's Gazette,' that fierce little enemy to the embarrassed and needy man. A good friend to us lawyers and industrious money-lenders, though; ha! ha! Confound that knocking. What can it mean? I suppose the people opposite, Screwcome and Stonehart, are having a new letter-box or plate put up, or something of the kind. It's a great nuisance at this time of day, almost as bad as a barrel-organ. Knock, knock, knock! I must copy this letter myself. 'Dear sir!' *very* dear, ha! ha! 'We regret to state —that your letter arrived—too late—as for us—to consult our client—Miss Bogleby—yesterday—but we have—with considerable dif—ficulty—obtained an—inter—view this after—noon!' A guinea for that, and two more days lost. I should say he'll look rather blue, with his wife and eight children, when he gets this letter. How these poor devils in difficulties do breed! Multiplication without increase, I call it! The clerks are all gone away, or I would send and complain about that knocking. It is really too much. I am nervous to-day, and——"

Here he rose, and opened the door leading to the passage. "Confound it! what does this mean?" he

cried; "it's at *my* door. What can they be about?" (Looks at his watch.) "After four o'clock! Those people from the Institution will not come now. I must get home to dinner, and prepare for my interview with that infernal Manvers. Stop! I must see what this noise means!"

So saying, Mr. Grinderby attempted to open his outer-door, which, however, resisted all his efforts. A sound as of stifled laughter from without reached him. "What, fastened in!" he cried, as he vainly turned the key in the inner-door; for both doors had been secured by the mechanical skill of the practised Downy. "This is some practical joke; some villainous trick of a discharged clerk. None of my fellows dare do it." And he violently shook the door. "I'll have an action against everybody for this!" he screamed, foaming at the mouth with passion, and shaking his fist. "I'll bring a suit against the Society for negligence, damages five thousand pounds. I'll——" Here he ran to the window. "Hilloh!" he shouted, "murder! thieves! I am locked in. Bring a ladder! No! that is useless. I have just had those new iron stanchions put in, and I can't get my head out to shout; but I'll make them hear. Hilloh! Help! Fire! I can't see a soul belonging to the Fields. There's that old white-aproned fool Purvis, but he's deaf as a post. I'll get him discharged next week. He's not fit for his situation. Let me try the door once more."

As he seized the handle in the hope of pulling it open by main force, he saw a dirty-looking note on the floor, and stooping with some difficulty, for he

trembled all over, and felt giddy with rage and vexation, he picked it up and opened it. "What is this filthy scrawl?" he said. "A woman's writing, too!" and putting on his glasses, he managed to read as follows. Our readers will probably at once guess whence it came. We must observe that Susan had most carefully endeavoured to follow the Downy's pronunciation in her spelling.

"VICKED OLD BLOKE,—You are as fast as tenpenny nails can make you. Don't holler too much, it might hinjure your constitooshun. You're safe to be loosed out, ven the clerks come in the mornin'. We've a himportant consultashun with *our* client, Mr. J. S. Manvers, just arrived from Amerikey." (As the Downy remarked at the time, if that don't put him in a merry key, I knows nothin' about it.) "It's werry gratifyin' to us to know you've plenty of sarmons in that 'ere blessed blue-bag of yourn, and hopes you'll ripent accordin'.

(Signed) "J. TOPS.
"THE DOWNY COVE.
"SUSAN.

"Vitness, Job Twig,
"Late horfice herrand-boy to the above, residin' at No. 6, Ship-court, Fleet-street.

"P.S.—The D. C. presents his pertickler respex to Mister Grinderby, and begs to hannounce as he has painted hout yer wennerabel name from the door this arternoon, and bein' werry pattriotic in his phelinx, vishes as he could do as much for all the lieyers in Hingland."

"Accursed conspiracy!" yelled Grinderby. "Thieves! —— thieves! May their souls—— Ha! fooled and ruined. Manvers will be caught! The blood mounts to my head. I am giddy, faint. Help! help!" and he staggered back, reeled, clutched at a chair, and fell heavily on the carpet in his own room. The blood gushed freely from his nose, a circumstance which probably prevented this being the last scene in his sordid and useless existence. There let us leave him for the present, a victim to the artful contrivance of the Downy.

## CHAPTER XX.

### INSPECTOR LANNER'S LITTLE PLANT.

Ils allerènt devisant de milles chouses théologicques, qui s'embrouilloyant trez-fort.—*L'Heritier du Diable.*

In a small public-house, the "Cat and Cauliflower," at the back of Webb's Fields, there were a couple of individuals about the time that Mr. Grinderby discovered his situation, each of whom appeared in imminent danger of falling into a fit also, but from a very dissimilar cause.

"I knocked 'em," said the Downy, for he was one of the twain, "hinto the holes as wos ready gimbleted, as hif they'd bin so many hot knives agoin' hinto a wegetable-marrer."

"Will they hold?" said Tops, for he was the other individual in question.

"There's nine-and-twenty nail druv into that door, vich is British hoak," replied his friend, "and hevery vun on 'em vill 'ave to be cut round afore a pair o' pinchers vill bite, that's hall, and Capting Lanner he's gone round and sent hall the porters hoff hout of the Fields on distant messages, and told the perlice

as is on dooty not to hinterfere. I'd give six months' hincome hout of the Three per Sents to see the hold feller, ven he's collared his humbreller and blue-bag for a start home."

"Or when he reads our 'letter of advice,' as Susan calls it," said Tops, "which she spelt according to your particular fancy."

"Hall I hopes is," returned the Downy, "that he von't take it hout of none of them pore clyints and clerks of hisn as can't help theirselves; but I fancy as how we've shut him hup hentirely in the bis'ness line. I expex he'll re-tire on his fortin, and dewote his hamiable henergies in futur' to growin' six-and-eightpenny dalilahs, or wotever you call em, for the chance of a thirteen-and-fourpenny prize."

So saying they both winked and laughed, and laughed and winked, until their faces looked for all the world, as the Downy said, "like a couple of wet humbrellers folded up hugly;" and Tops betook himself as a relief and sedative to the perusal of "Lloyd's Newspaper," which he found on the bar-counter.

"Wotever air you readin' hof?" said the Downy, presently.

"Why," said Tops, "there's two gory-liars escaped from Wombwell's menagerie, and a cutting about the country like a pair of lunàtic sollycitors bolted from the awful consequences of their own misdeeds."

"Wot!" cried the Downy, "a pair o' them big apes as is stuffed in the British Mew-seeum got hout of a show?"

"And hooked it along a turnpike-road near Derby," added Tops.

"You might jest as vell 'ave kept that dark," said the Downy. "Wot's the use of frightenin' this young lady? She'll be thinkin' that it's us as has got loosed out."

"Well," cried Tops, breaking out into a fresh fit of laughter, "that's a lively idear that is."

This time their mirth was so infectious, that the jolly barmaid, a fair buxom person of some thirty years of age, the wife of a policeman, could not help joining in.

"Well, you are a cure!" she said to the Downy; "if I ever see one. Whatever have you two been up to?" The Downy was attired, we omitted to say, as a working carpenter. "I should think some one had left you a small property," continued the barmaid. "I say, young man" (to Tops), "you'll do yourself an injury if you go on like that. Lend us your light heart, will you, just for a day or two, and I'll go and spend a happy day at Rosherville Gardens."

"Oh, lord! oh, lord!" cried Tops. "Whatever is old Grinderby a-saying of, surely? But it's my opinion, he's out by this time."

"Not he," quoth the Downy. "There ain't no vun left hardly hin the Fields, I tell yer. There's a rare noisy party lives above him, one as carries on no hend of games; and the porters if they hears anythink will put it hall down to him and his friends. Hall the rest as hangs out on them stairs is bis'ness

parties, and has gone avay at two, I tells yer, cos of the holiday."

"Well," replied Tops, "he's sure to be out in an hour or so."

"I tell yer," answered the Downy, "it couldn't be done in two, arter he's let 'em know hall about it. First they got to send for a carpenter, and it's rare hodds if he comes within 'arf an hour; and if he gits them nails hout in an hour, I'll eat 'em atween shavins for sandviches."

"Even then he'll keep his appointment with this 'ere Manvers," said Tops, "and what will be the use of your caper?"

"He von't," replied the Downy; "he'll be shuck horful for vun thing. Besides, d'ye think he'd wenture hisself there arter our letter? He's a precious sight too vide avake for any sech a thing."

"Well," said Tops, "it's a game anyhow."

"Do tell us what the little game is?" said the woman at the bar, in her most insinuating tone.

"It's a badger, my dear," said the Downy. "He wanted to go to the Review this afternoon backerds, as them hanimals halways do, yer see, and ve vasn't minded to let him, that's hall."

"Much obliged to you for nothing, Mr. Impudence," said the lady, much offended. "I dare say your friend won't be so uncivil."

"Him?" said the Downy. "Oh! he's the hessence of perliteness, he is. He's jest had three months for beatin' his wife for forgetten the ingin sarce, a day as he had a biled rabbit for dinner. 'Rabbit arout ingins,' ses he, 'wot's the good of that?' and he

larrups her accordin'. The beak was agoin' to guv him six months; but being fond of ingins hisself, he thought there wos extenyatin' sircumstrences; and he honly got three in crinsekence. Look how short is 'air is."

This being delivered with the utmost gravity the woman looked at Tops, who had just happened to have his hair cut pretty close, with a puzzled expression.

"I don't think you're either of you much account," she said. "I hope you've been doing nothing wrong, that's all. I think you may just as well go and laugh somewhere else. This is a respectable house. It's pretty near time for my husband to come in," she said, looking at the clock.

"Well," said Tops "this is the first time I ever heard there was any offence in parties enjoying their own joke."

"It's very rude before a lady, and to tell her such a parcel of stories about a badger and a boiled rabbit. It's easy to see what some folks are."

"No offence, miss," said the Downy; "the fact is we've been and chained up ugly——"

"That you haven't," retorted the lady, glad of the opportunity afforded for a retort, "or you wouldn't be here."

"You've got it there," cried Tops. "Come, don't be angry, missus. I'll tell you all about it, the next time I come."

"Thank you for nothing," was the lady's answer. "Pr'aps it mightn't be safe to know what you could tell me."

What further compliments might have passed were

stopped by the entrance of Inspector Lanner and a stout policeman, who turned out to be the husband of the fair *dame du comptoir*. The inspector came in laughing as heartily as Tops and the Downy themselves.

"It's all serene," he said. "He's as quiet as if he'd been chloryformed. I passed by the staircase, and no one was even looking. I say, mind I'm not answerable for this little game. It's not exactly business, you know."

"Well, captain!" said the lady. "I should have thought you were the last man to go torturing a poor animal like that."

"What do you mean, missis?" said Inspector Lanner.

"Why the badger, to be sure," was the answer. "I didn't think such cruelties was permitted, leastways by the Force you belong to."

"Oh! I see, Mrs. Willum," replied Lanner, "these two parties have been chaffing you, that's all. Come, what shall it be, mates? Say the word. I'll allow you just one drop, before we start for Deptford. A little Dutch courage, my dear. These 'gents' are not in the profession, and we've an ugly job in hand."

"I'll tell yer wot it is," said the Downy; "I ain't much given to boastin'. I am but a little un, and there ain't much muscle 'ere; but as for Mr. Tops, you'd better give him summit to keep him from bilin' hover, that's my hopinion. He's a longin' to polish off that genelman from Amerikey—he is, and no mistake. 'Ave yer got anythink as is soothin', missus?'

"You may find it no joking matter, Mr. What's-his-name—Downy, or whatever you call yourself," said the good-natured detective, who was one of the best of his class. "These Yankees don't stick at a trifle, I can tell you."

"Then I 'opes they von't stick it into me," responded the Downy. "There ain't much of me, but what there is, is a trifle as I respex. Do yer think this 'ere pertickler Yankee is likely to carry a six-bladed knife now, or hany little trifle of that kind?"

"Indeed I do," was the answer. "I thought you wouldn't like it, when it came to the point."

"That pint is jest wot I don't hintend to come to," said the Downy. "Hall I 'ave to say is, that if the hindividual intends to come any of them little games, I shall do my best to sarcomwent him, that's all. Lor bless you, I'm used to handle arms."

"Indeed," replied the inspector; "I shouldn't have thought it now. I didn't know that they carried any weapons in the Shoe-black Brigade."

"Considerin' the hunconstitooshinal vay in which the bobbies is drilled, and the huniforms I see among 'em," retorted the Downy, "wich they must 'ave been bought in at Ashley's when it wos turned hinto a reglar theayter as didn't pay, vy I owns vith sorrer, that you licks me in a millingtary pint of view. But I've got my heye upon yer; I know wot yer up to; you're a makin' the peelers hinto a harmy, a Force, as you likes to call it, wich is meant to make a parcel of slaves of the Hinglish nation, ven hall their liberty is stole from 'em."

"Very likely," said Mr. Lanner; "can't say. It don't matter to me, that's all I know."

"I tell yer, it will matter to you some day, cos afore it cums to the wust, we means to make a fite for it, and we shall tackle you in a manner as you never expex."

"What may that be?" said Lanner, carelessly.

"Vy," said the Downy, "we're a svearin' in hall the cook-maids to stop your cold meat rashuns and lock the hairey gates, and I should like to know vere your army'll be then, capting."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lanner. "I'll owe you one for that. But you haven't told us yet where you learnt the use of arms."

"Use of 'em, indeed! Wos harms hever hany use?" asked the Downy. "D'yer call hanythink useful, as is honly fit to cut folks' throats, or shoot 'em, like a parcel of wild beasts? *Use* of harms? I said nothink about using of 'em. I said I wos used to handle 'em and the proper vay to handle 'em is to bury 'em, as the Injins do their tommyhawks. But if yer must know, I used to run messages for Colt, him as inwented rewolwers, wich our harmy might 'ave 'ad in the Crime-ere, along vith korfy mills, but didn't. Blest if it warn't a case of crime '*ere*, and no mistake."

"They should have sent you out there, Mr. Downy," said Lanner. "You'd have shown them how to manage affairs better, I dare say."

"The most ignorantest poor feller, vith 'ands and a 'ead, and a 'art in the right place, mind yer, could ha' done that, and no mistake. D'ye think I don't

know nothink from hall them pore sick and wounded sojers as was cast hoff on their return, to get their livin'?"

"Ay, ay," said Lanner, "I dare say it's bad enough; but what is to be done?"

"Vy, not them as has fought their country's battles oughtn't to be done," returned the Downy; "not them as has gone through fire, and vater, and smoke, and steel and lead, or rayther them as lead and steel has gone through, and which has thought no more of it than hif it was a dinner. But I tell yer it's hall rotten haltogether and can't last; and wot's more, it ain't got no bis'ness to last. We'd better 'ave no harmy, no, nor navy, neither, than 'ave 'em sarved out as they air. D'ye think if I wos the Goverment, I'd let a parsel of pore boys run about the streets like that, and we wantin' sailors? D'ye think I vouldn't train 'em and edycate 'em, and be glad of the chance, for 'arf the money its costs for a lot of spiteful madgistrates and good-for-nothin' perlice? I ax yer pardin', capting, I don't mean no hoffence. I vish they wos hall like you, as vould let a pore man live."

"Well, my friend," said Lanner, "there's a good deal of truth in what you say. Only I don't see how we are to mend it, that's all. Those that can won't, and those that can't don't get a chance, and so there it is."

"Well, upon my word," said Mrs. Willum, "you two are having a pretty talk to yourselves. Only think of my having taken these two friends of yours to be no better than they should be."

"I haven't said that they are, Mrs. Willum. You know I have to meet some queer customers in the way of business," said Inspector Lanner. "I advise you to look out for your spoons."

"That's a good one, and you in the house," replied the lady; "but you always enjoy your joke, captain."

"Why," said Lanner, "there was one of our chiefs lost his gold watch and chain t'other evening. The man who took it pretended to be putting him on to a prig, and he was so busy watching him, he didn't take any thought for his own ticker.

"Come," said Tops, who had been out to meet Susan in a pastrycook's shop round the corner, to tell her how matters were going on "*in re* an attorney," "if you've done talking, I think we'd better be on the move."

"It's quite time," said Lanner. "Here, Mrs. Willum, tell your husband that we're going. I mean to have him and a couple more outside, in case of a bolt or a rescue."

"As you please," observed Tops. "You know best, I'm agreeable to anything; I should have thought that we three were more than a match for one Yankee anyhow."

"How do you know it's only one we shall have to deal with?" asked Lanner. "I dare say he's got his pals. Perhaps a lot of foreign sailors, for all we can say. It's a rum sort of place, I can tell you. But whatever there is, I hope there'll be no women concerned in it. They're the desperatest devils, a

precious sight worse than men to tackle. What do you think, Mr. Downy?"

"I've knowed one, as it took eight of your harmy and a stretcher to lock up," answered the Downy. "She might a stuffed a child's pillow with the whiskers of the Force, as she pulled hout. And sarved 'em right too; for they'd no bis'ness to meddle with her. She wos earnin' an honest livin', vich wos more nor they wos a-doin', ven they took and banged and pulled her about, as they did shameful."

"I dare say, if the truth was to be told, that you were locked up along with her," said Lanner.

"I wos, and I'm proud of it," replied the Downy; "and I'd do it agen to-morrer, if I see another sech a case, vich I hopes I never shall."

"He speaks his mind out, don't he?" said Lanner.

"I dessay," replied the Downy, "that I shan't 'ave a hopportunity to do it much longer. I never could bring myself to call a constable 'sir,' as hif he wos a horficer, as they calls themselves. Vy, they'll lock a man hup soon for not touchin' his hat to 'em as he passes. That's wot it's comin' to."

"I tell you what," quoth Tops, "you two'll never a-done talking to-night."

"Don't you be so fast," answered the incorrigible Downy. "Jest becos you've left hoff sweet-heartin' for a few hours, you thinks you're heverybody. He's in sech a precious hurry to git back. Tell us wot time yer've got to meet her to-night, and then we can hact accordin'. I vunder she let him cum at all, that I do. I say, capting, mind yer don't take to courtin'.

It won't suit your bis'ness. I mean none of this 'ere earnest kind of spoonin'. Now, then, 'ere goes for the spree. I don't know as hever I was out on this sort of lay afore."

"You mayn't find it altogether so much of a spree as you reckon," said Lanner. "Remember it's murder I'm going to take him for, and not merely this will job of yours. It's a case of life and death; and I say once more to both of you, if you take my advice, you'll keep out of it, and leave it to those whose trade it is to deal with an ugly customer like this Manvers. Only say the word, mates. There's no disgrace in drawing back."

"There's no drawing back about me, I hope," said Tops.

"We're jest the sort to dror back, we air," quoth the Downy. "But I'll tell yer wot it is. If yer wait here much longer, there'll be a depytashun from the hinsurance hoffices, a-beggin' of me not to expose my walyable life too rashly."

"You're a rum card," said Lanner, approvingly.

"I say, guvernor," said the Downy, as they got into the street, after the party had duly taken leave of Mrs. Willum, who begged Mr. Lanner to take care of himself, "as there were very few of his sort about," &c. &c.—"I say, guvernor, I can't go arter hall."

"Indeed! Mr. Downy, and why not, pray?"

"Think of my unborn children, and the goose-club I've bin a subscribin' to. Besides, ain't I in a raffle for a 'armonium and a pair o' plated mustard-spoons? Ain't the ties o' property too strong? Besides vich, I

got to take the cheer at the Hunited Vitechapel Watermen's Vidowers' Hassociation to-morrow hevenin.' Tripe and ingins for them as likes 'em at nine. That's a morial hobligation."

"Come," said the inspector, "that's a good one, that is. You're not a widower, Mr. Downy."

"Don't you see, they allers has a single man in the cheer to control the vatervorks."

Thus pleasantly chatting, the party proceeded to an apartment provided by Mr. Lanner, where Tops assumed the Downy's disguise as a carpenter, and the latter arrayed himself as a negro minstrel in the most wonderful garments, together with a paper shirt-collar of portentous dimensions. They then took the train for Deptford. Tops was by far the most silent of the party. The fact is, he was bent on vengeance; and thinking, though with far different feelings, both of his present mistress, Susan, and his former master, the luckless Arthur Aubrey.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE CRIB AT DEPTFORD.

*Advena.* ἐιπὲ, φιλ', ἐιπὲ, τόπος τις, πόθεν ὄχλος ὅδε;
*Hibernicus.* σὸι δὲ τύχη μεγάλη, ξένε φερτάτε . . . .
ἔστι δὲ συμπόσιη θαλερὴ, καὶ μυσικὰ φύλλα
σκηπτροφορῆι δ'ὁ νέος, σκηπτροφερῆι τ'ὸ γὲρων,
μητρῶν δ' ἀσπασμὸι, θυγατρῶν δ'ἄφαρ ἐισιν ἔρωτες
πάντοθεν ἐισ' ὕμνοι, πάντοθεν ἐστι χορὸς.
*Ad.* ἐις δὲ μέσον θρώσκει τίς Ἄρης . . . . . .
κρανία δ"αμφιτέροισι καταγνύμενα στεναχίζει
ἐιπὲ τίς ἡ μῆνις; θαῦμα τι τὸυτο θέλει.
*Hib.* Ὸυ θᾶυμ', ὸυ μῆνις——
*Ad.* μὴ καὶ τόδε τέρψις;
*Hib.* Ζεῦ, ἔχεις——
*Ad.* νῦνγε καλῶς ἐρίδων γῆν καλέουσιν Ἔριν.

"*Nundinis Donnybricæis nomen Vernaculum Erin luculenter exponitur.*" *Postulates and Data*, No. 22.

Deptford is not a pleasant suburb of London. It is not genteel, like Brixton or Peckham, nor vulgarly gay, like Islington, not respectable in a small way, like Camden Town, nor busy but well-to-do, like Camberwell. It is crowded, poverty-stricken, dingy, disreputable, and unwholesome. In bad times, when labour is plentiful and employment slack, food

dear, and wages low, it is gloomy as well as squalid. Nothing seems good in Deptford. The bread looks half-baked and dirty, the meat black and uninviting, the very fruits undersized, and either rotten or green, the bacon rancid, and even the herrings not what herrings should be. Bad smells abound; but the population, such as it is, multiplies, though it cannot be said to thrive. With the exception of the dock-yard labourers, who are strong, hulking fellows enough, the inhabitants are pale, stunted, and degenerate-looking. It is a very dispiriting place. Even the muslin curtains of the milliners' shops are yellow and dirty, and there is a tendency to grow musk plants and other humble specimens of Flora within the small, and, we should imagine, unhealthy rooms. A pretty, well-dressed girl in Deptford is a kind of vision, which is probably very rarely seen. We should feel inclined to wish her well out of the High-street, or any of its narrow tributary confluents, if we saw her there. We are the last to sneer at mere poverty, wretchedness, and consequent degradation. The "unclean living no less perilous than desperation," to be found in so many outlying parts of our great metropolis, and even in the heart of the West-end itself, witness Bedfordbury near the Haymarket, is to be attributed to causes beyond the power of the sufferers to avert. We have no supercilious enmity towards Deptford. We have felt sorry to find ourselves there, and proportionately glad to escape from it, when our business has been ended. We like to see our fellow-creatures happy, smiling, healthy, and prosperous. Is it the present tendency of the admi-

nistration of this great and wealthy country, in the present era of enlightenment, to make them so? There is a railway station at Deptford. It is suitable in appearance to the place. It is narrow, crowded, dirty, and depressing, except so far as it holds out a prospect of speedy departure. But then truly one arrives by the same means. The greasy spiral stairs by which the passengers ascend and descend are so dangerous that more than one accident resulting in death has occurred in consequence. But what of that? We do not apprehend that the parties sacrificed had a large status in the world; and possibly they were intoxicated, or in too great a hurry to return to Deptford. Peter the Great once lodged in Deptford. It is a pity that he ever left it. He was better employed in carving figure-heads and laying down keels, than in cutting off his subjects' heads and playing the executioner himself. There is a street named after the "gentle" Evelyn, who saw that fierce and sanguinary reaction which threatened the liberties of England, when Russell and Algernon Sidney died. London "gents" go down to the Rye House now-a-days ignorant of all that dark story of fanatical treachery and hate. The house of fine old Admiral Benbow still stands. We trust that his breed is not yet quite extinct in England. We have said that there is a railway station in Deptford. Railways are the boast of civilisation. Do they bring comfort to our doors? Not necessarily, at least judging by such a place as Deptford. We want something besides railways for happiness; something beyond electric telegraphs for truth.

After all, Deptford is not so very unhealthy, according to the bills of mortality, except in times of cholera, typhus, &c., which diseases have generally a frequent and fruitful innings in that locality. The suburb is built on quicksand, as well as mud, the latter being chiefly near the river bank. If the High-street of Deptford be unenticing in appearance, what shall we say of such localities as the Stowage, the Rope-walk, Mill-lane, and the "Green?" Does the reader suppose that there is any green there, enough to gladden the existence of a solitary duck? Doubtless, there was a "green" there about the period, when a woodcock might have been flushed where Regent-street now stands, and there was excellent snipe-shooting at Knightsbridge; but not for the double-barrels of the modern sportsman. Down the Rope-walk runs a central gutter, after the foreign fashion, choked with the foulest garbage, and with salads not only exactly "à la mayonnaise."

Mill-lane is chiefly noted for providing accommodation in the shape of lodging-houses for the lowest order of beggars and tramps. Near this, and in a part known as New Town, stood the public-house in which Manvers had located himself, and in which he expected Grinderby to call that evening. The house in question was by no means of the flaring gin-palace type so common in low neighbourhoods in the present day. It had not even any tawdry and paltry pretensions as a Temple of Bacchus. There were no brilliant chandeliers. The gas-lights did not burn amid glass vine-leaves and bunches of grapes. There were no mirrors, there was no gilding, no ornament. It

was, in fact, a wretched-looking den, which no respectable person would have liked to enter, even in broad daylight. The house was not lofty; but at the back its elevation was much greater, owing to a fall in the ground. It was only two stories high, but it had the height of two stories more behind. The lane at the back was very narrow, being not more than some fourteen feet across; in fact, it was only a foot thoroughfare. The houses which ran parallel behind were only one story high. For some reason there was a sort of communication between the lower part of a window of the second story of the public-house and the top of one of these houses. It consisted of a sort of little slanting bridge of planks with a single iron rail on each side. It was suggestive of an escape; and probably had been designed, if not used, for that purpose. At the time of our narrative, the lower end, having got partly detached, in fact being entirely so at one corner, a couple of lazy workmen had been employed the day before to repair it. For some reason or other, they had not completed their task. Probably they were awaiting some necessary materials. At all events they had spent the greater part of the day in drinking at the bar, and in discussing their job. They had, however, completely detached the little bridge, and left it hanging suspended from the higher, that is, the public-house side.

The landlord of this foul ken, where the lowest votaries of Bacchus were accustomed nightly to meet, drink, argue, quarrel, and frequently fight, was grey and partly bald, stout, pale, and ill-looking. After all, what is physiognomy without circumstance?

He looked like what he was. Had his dirty white apron been a black one, had his coat been better, and his stout legs encased in silk instead of woollen stockings, had he been worth four thousand or fourteen thousand pounds a-year, instead of some four hundred pounds capital *pour tout potage*, he might have been a bishop. But instead of a Pharisee, he was a publican, in the modern sense, of the lowest type; a reproach and a disgrace to the worthy, manly, and thoroughly English body of men called Licensed Victuallers; for there are black sheep in that calling, as well as in every other; a fact which sour Sabbatarians and violent canting Teetotallers, who would deny God's gifts, in the shape of wholesome and sustaining liquors to their fellow-creatures, do not fail to make the most of. He had a large head, but Greek particles had never troubled his brain. He was a good father, and not a bad husband, but he would turn out a poor wretch who would not pay for more fiery gin, or filthy beer, into the street to die in the kennel, or to be locked up in the police station without the slightest compunction. Had he not done so, where would his living have been? In poor neighbourhoods, even a doctor must be hard-hearted to live, much more to support those dependent on his exertions. Mr. Gruffem was not a bad man at heart—he only did as he was obliged to do in that neighbourhood, resembling, as it did, the lowest parts of Liverpool, where a free-trade Bench of magistrates with Sabbatarian views grant licenses wholesale, in order to bring the legitimate liquor-trade into disrepute.

Mr. Gruffem was the victim of competition and slender means. If a robbery were concocted in Mr. Gruffem's parlour, he was deaf, save to orders for liquor, and these he expected of course. He was extremely amenable to the blandishments, or terrors of that army of occupation billeted on the lower orders—to wit the army of the late Sir Robert Peel. He would come round the corner with a bottle and a couple of glasses any time at night—even after eleven on Sunday night, when wanted. He would show the sergeants of the Force into his house at any hour with great affability and politeness. In fact, after his way, he tried to make things pleasant. His rum was considered the strongest, and consequently the best, to be had in that neighbourhood. On the very evening when Manvers had made his appointment with Mr. Grinderby, Gruffem had shown considerable annoyance at the bridge being left in the dangerous state we have mentioned. It certainly looked as if it were not unlikely to become detached altogether, and fall into the lane below, where crowds of children were at play. He accordingly abused the two Irish workmen who had left it in so unsatisfactory a state, after his fashion, and in no very measured terms.

"What did you begin the job for at all?" he said. "You knowed you hadn't got the new supports ready."

"It's all right, master!" said one. "Faith, it would bear your weight at the end of it anyhow."

"I don't care," replied Gruffem; "you knowed

well enough you couldn't finish it. I expect I shall get a summons for leaving it in that state. And suppose it was to fall on any one's head?"

"You'd be had up for manslaughter, governor," said a pale thin man, who had once been a lawyer's clerk, and who made his living by writing women's letters, and giving legal advice to sailors.

"I suppose I should," said Gruffem; "and all on account of them two lazy beggars."

"Let's have another 'arf-pint, master," said one of them, at that moment.

"You haven't paid for the last," returned Gruffem. "This ain't a credit house."

"Sure, I'll pay it to-morrow, when I've finished the job," replied the other.

This was an indiscreet speech.

"Come, clear out!" replied Gruffem. "None of your nonsense here. It won't do, I tell you, I won't stand it;" and he pushed the intruder towards the door, or rather doors, for there were two doors, both with small windows, guarded, the outer one with iron bars, and the inner with brass wires. There were also two steep narrow steps into the street. The Irishman made some show of resistance, coupled with language which was anything but parliamentary. "Here, Jem," cried the landlord, much as he would have done to a dog. A short young man with close-cropped hair, and with his shirt-sleeves tucked up, leaped over the counter. Without waiting for further orders, he made a single feint at the nearest Irishman, and then planted a tremendous blow between

his eyes. The latter staggered back, when the other butted at him and sent him down the steps into the street. His mate with but slight variation was subjected to similar treatment. Some women screamed and yelled, and a crowd of Irish gathered round the door threatening vengeance, but Mr. Gruffem took things very coolly. He pitched out the coat of one of the men, which the fellow had carried loosely thrown over his shoulder and dropped in the struggle. There was, in fact, a row, such as occurs periodically in such places as we have attempted to describe. They are like sudden disturbances, "shindies," to use an Irish term, in a monkey-cage. No, it is worse than that. There is all the fantastic passion of the ape, but there is also the ferocity of the tiger, the hyena, and the carcajou. It is a tumult or carnivora, ape-wise, or ape-fashion. There are screams and yells, howling and struggling, such as an unfortunate traveller, lost in an African forest, may perchance hear. Shut your windows, ye dwellers in a Christian city, if there is such a den near you, in the hot summer nights. Better a stifling atmosphere of quiet, than the shrieks and oaths of that midnight crew. There is a storm in the wild-beast cage. Listen! The keepers are at hand—the police appear on the scene, and the noise and oaths are redoubled for awhile. Now it is in the street. The victims are being carried off; then comes the street discussion. You hear the pros and cons of metropolitan Thyrsis and Amaryllis, of urban, but not urbane, Melibœus and Corydon, not in the shade, but the

lamp-light. At length quiet supervenes, only broken by a distant shriek or yell. You hear the noise of closing the shutters. Then comes the tramp of three or four heavy pairs of regulation boots. The police have returned to talk it over with the landlord. There is a mutter of bass voices, the clink of a furtive can, the chink of the necessary fee, and the nuisance is ended for the night.

Such disturbances were too frequent in the neighbourhood of New Town to create much excitement. The Irish labourers and their sympathisers had their talk out, and withdrew at least some distance up the street.

Mr. Gruffem's pot-boy was greatly feared by these savage men. He was an ex-pugilist, whose temper had been too bad for the Ring. Such men are employed at some of our popular places of entertainment, as we have already recorded, occasionally in the cause of "order," to break the British citizen's head and rob him with impunity. This fellow's post at Gruffem's was no sinecure in the way of fighting and settling quarrels in a summary way. If two customers had a difference which threatened to culminate in a fight, Jem Nobbler, alias the "Catsmeatman," a pocket Hercules of ten stone weight or thereabouts, would thrust himself between the intended combatants, and say, "Drop it!" or "None of that here; fight outside as much as you like." If his mandate was not attended to, he seldom gave another warning. He would at once select the least valuable customer to the house, and tackle him in the

most approved style. The bigger his antagonist, the greater generally his triumph. The only man who had successfully resisted his authority was Manvers, on the night of his arrival. He had shown a disposition to quarrel with every one, and so abused Gruffem for pouring out a measure of brandy for him, instead of handing him the bottle in the American fashion, that Jem thought it necessary to interfere. Accordingly, he was making his accustomed spring over the counter, when Manvers closed with him, and after nearly throttling him, flung him with such tremendous violence to the ground, that Jem was stunned, and unable to show up for at least a week after. As soon as he recovered, he followed Manvers out one afternoon in order to have his revenge, and challenged him to "fight him like a man." The reply was a contemptuous laugh.

"Look hyar, strainger, jest mind your own business, will you? I don't 'fight like a man;' and I'm not agoin' to be made a fool of by any of them old country rules of yourn. If I fight, I fight; and by thunder! if you don't leave off them antics, I'll draw the bead on you."

So saying, he pulled out a revolver, and presented it at Jem's head. This was more than that individual bargained for. The English rough is greatly afraid of arms. Volunteering has now done something towards familiarising the masses with guns and swords. A short time ago, nine-tenths of the British male adult population knew no more about the use of a gun or pistol than so many old women, and would

have handled one as timidly and as clumsily. Putting aside our sailors and soldiers—none too numerous by the way—and a few undisciplined gamekeepers, poachers, sportsmen, and sparrow-shots, there never was a nation so utterly helpless as this one, less than ten years ago from the time we write. The fact is ludicrous but true. England had no line of secondary defence whatever. Like others of his class, Jem Nobbler had a wholesome dread of implements which he did not understand. So he growled, parleyed, shook hands, and liquored up, and Manvers became king. Old Gruffem was by no means pleased at this turn of affairs; but he couldn't help it. Besides, Manvers was a good customer—at least ran up a long bill, living as he did on the premises.

"Licked by a Yankee?" said Gruffem to Jem; "well, I'd never 'a thought it. You ought to have your wages cut down one half, that's what you ought."

"He's no more a Yankee, nor I am," Jem would growl in reply to such remarks as the above, which were not unfrequent. "He may have bin over the herring pond. I don't say he haven't, mind, but he never learnt what he knows over there. No, no! he's six stone heavier nor me, and an Englishman. Besides, I offered to fight him fair, so as to give a little un a chance. But as for saying he's a Yankee, that cock won't fight for me."

Mr. Manvers occupied a back bedroom attic at the "One-Eyed Marine." On this evening he had told Gruffem that he expected a friend, and was to be

called down if he came. The Irish row had just died away, when Inspector Lanner, attired somewhat in the style of a swell young captain of a Citizen steamboat, made his appearance at Gruffem's bar. The moment was auspicious; for every one was too busy talking over the late disturbance to take much notice of a stranger. But we must reserve the evening for the ensuing chapter.

# CHAPTER XXII.

## SIGNOR MANVERINI'S LEAP FOR LIFE.

After which, at half-past eight, terrific ascent on the tight rope of Madame Genéve, as the Fire King's Bride. At nine precisely, Signor Smithini's leap for life over an omnibus, through a circle of revolving daggers on to the green. Grand Finale. The Siege of Delhi by the Muddlecombe Volunteers. Tremendous explosion of a petard. Tea and shrimps, ninepence. Hot water for parties supplying their own tea and sugar twopence each, children half-price. No charge for babies in arms. Kiss in the ring, tiddle-cum-torters, swings, wheels of fortune, &c. &c. Aunt Sally, as patronised by the nobility. Dancing at half-past nine in the Painted Pavilion of Past Grand Masters of the O. K. Lodge. The liquors and refreshments of the first quality.—*Summer Programme for Snargate Excursionists*, A.D. 1867.

THE afternoon had been singularly sultry, and the sky was dull and lowering. The air was full of electricity, and the nervous portion of the community felt that weight and oppression which precedes a tempest in an unusual degree. Still up to the hour of the rendezvous at the "One-Eyed Marine," the distant muttering of the storm was unheard in the roar and din and confused murmur of traffic, and the thunder of the omnibuses and sharp rattle of the cabs, and the shouting of their cads and drivers

was the chief and usual sound heard, save in the vicinity of a railway bridge or station, throughout the East-end of commercial London. The portion of the bar of the above-mentioned hostelry intended for the public accommodation was divided into three compartments, communicating with each other by small side-doors in the partitions, of which the middle compartment was by far the largest. The arrangement was not unlike that of a pawnbroker's shop, on a somewhat larger scale. In the central and largest compartment Jem Nobbler and some dozen men and women were holding forth on the rights and wrongs of the ejectment which had just taken place. Mr. Gruffem was busy at his tap. So Lanner popped through one of the side-doors into the left side-box, or "Bottle and Jug" department, and addressed Mr. Gruffem as follows:

"A pint of ale, governor, if you please."

"You'd better go in there," said Gruffem, motioning him to the central part. "This here is private."

"*Is* it now?" said Lanner. "Then we'll keep it so, if you please. Do you know who I am?"

"No; nor don't want to. I ain't in no humour for chaff just now."

"But you'll come to corn," said Lanner. "Here!" and he handed him a card, whereon was printed "Inspector Lanner," and in smaller letters, the division to which he, the said inspector, belonged, and where he might be heard of.

The landlord looked at the card and at him, and apparently from what he saw of him was inclined to

admit that he might be the person whom the card described.

"Well," he said, "who's wanted?"

"I'm come to arrest a party in your house," replied Lanner.

"For what?" inquired the other.

"Felony, of course," said Lanner, in a cold, hard, almost indifferent tone, but emphatic enough in its way. "Will you be on the square or not?"

Mr. Gruffem at once knew the individual for whom Lanner had come. He was in his room above, and the remembrance of the broken escape flashed at once through his mind. But he had not by any means decided how to act. He hated Manvers, who bullied, and, in vulgar parlance, sat upon him too much. The next few words of Lanner decided him.

"I want to do it on the quiet," said that worthy. "I always prefer the quiet. But I've plenty of force outside, if wanted. Besides officers, I've two 'pals' who are interested in the recovery of some papers, and who will be here in a minute or two. Now what you've got to do is to contrive an interview with this Tadgers, or whatever he calls himself, as if we were friends of yours. He don't know me, though he has seen them before. Their own mothers wouldn't know them just now;" and Lanner slightly laughed, "since I have been their valet. You see, Mr. Gruffem, you'd best oblige me, if you want to keep this respectable house of yours open. I wish to do this job neatly, and if you behave on the square, it will be the best for you. I never forget a friend, nor yet one who goes contrary to my wishes."

"You know what sort of a party he is?" asked the landlord, with a jerk of his thumb in an upward direction.

Lanner nodded cheerfully.

"Carries we'pons," continued Gruffem.

Another nod from Lanner.

"I'll do anything you wish, short of lending a hand," said Gruffem, deprecatingly; "I couldn't do that in my own house, unless I was paid very handsome indeed."

"The sentiment does you credit, Mr. What's-your-name—Gruffem—isn't it?" returned Lanner. "I don't wish you to interfere any more than to put us in the way of meeting him in a sort of friendly way. He expects a party here at eight, don't he?"

"He do," said Gruffem.

"That party was to receive some papers from him; but I don't expect he'll come. I want to collar them instead, that's all. If we made a row, even if we were to surround the house, he might destroy them, or conceal them."

"I suppose," said Gruffem, "that you couldn't accommodate the matter for the papers and something handsome besides?"

"Not to be done," said Lanner, "at any price whatsoever."

"I see," quoth the accommodating Gruffem. "It's now half-past seven. Step into my parlour, sir, and I'll ask your friends in when they come."

So saying, he lifted a flap on hinges which was cut in the counter, and the inspector passed into the sanctum. The bar-parlour was a tolerably large

room, with a door leading to the staircase of the house, and another to a small court, surrounded by a high wall.

"By your leave," he said.

He then sat down. In a minute or two the landlord ushered in the Downy and Tops.

"Good evening, mate," said Tops. "It looks uncommon like tempest."

"Ve're in luck to git into sich a werry comfortable place as this," said the Downy, looking round him; "for if them blessed hillumynations ain't put out afore long, I never see the courage drownded out of a Chartist meetin'."

"Bring brandy-and-water and pipes for three," said Lanner.

Gruffem very shortly executed the order.

"What's the next move?" he said.

"Fetch that party down-stairs. Say there's three of your own particular friends here. Call me Wright; him Bones," (indicating the Downy); "and this gentleman" (namely, Tops), "Harry. When we've got him in talk, you" (to Gruffem) "go out, and as soon as you see one of my people in uniform enter the house, let him stand just inside the bar, and you come in here again. To prevent mistakes, I shall ask you the time. You answer, 'The right time,' and I shall then effect the capture. Don't let your pot-boy, or any one, interfere, and tell any females, if there are any in the house, to keep in their own rooms, and lock their doors for fear of accident."

Mr. Gruffem disappeared.

"Don't forget the rewolver," whispered the Downy; "it will be hall right, hif I can only get the 'andling of it for 'arf a minnit."

The trio sat very quiet in that dingy apartment. Presently the pot-boy came in, and laid a tray and cloth on the table, and placed thereon a cruet-stand and a loaf. This was a dodge of Gruffem's to "look natyral," as he said. It might have been noticed by a very minute observer that there was no knife or fork placed on that table.

The old Dutch clock ticked, ticked, and an accomplished grey parrot clawed her cage, and two or three times broke the silence by an emphatic interrogatory prefaced with an oath "—— you, who are you? —— you, who are you?"

We shall not give the interesting maledictory variations of the inquiring bird. Tops got up and looked at a print of the famous dog Billy, and then at a stuffed toy terrier pup, a representation of the celebrated fight between Broom and Hannan for five hundred pounds a side at Bicester, near Oxford, a stuffed bittern, ditto kingfisher, ditto squirrel, and other curiosities of the kind. There was a piece of sampler work done by Mrs. Gruffem's grandmother, introducing the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. There were also pictures of Mr. Gruffem's father and mother, the latter with her waist up to her armpits, and a turban on her head, which might have been the portraits of a celebrated actor and actress in the parts of Mr. and Mrs. Peachum in the "Beggars' Opera," but were not. The Downy turned his attention to the gas, which he

was about to meddle with to improve the light, when Lanner emphatically motioned him to abstain. At last, loud voices and heavy steps were heard above, and Mr. Manvers, *alias* Tadgers, together with Mr. Gruffem, descended into the room.

"I'll bet any one three to two, you don't make all the five pins twice running," said Lanner to the Downy, just as the door opened.

"'Arf-crowns or bobs?" inquired the Downy.

"Half-crowns or crowns if you like," said Lanner.

"Done with you in half-crowns, mate," cried Tops.

"You ain't got never a skittle-ground here, master, 'ave yer?" asked the Downy of Mr. Gruffem.

"No," said that individual, "there ain't room for it. But if you want a little sport, there's as good a bagatelle-board as any in England, and I don't care where t'other comes from," and he pointed to that article which stood in a corner of the room.

"Here's a gent here, I dessay, will jine in a game of four," continued Gruffem, indicating Manvers, who had entered, and had cast a scowling and uneasy glance at the strangers.

"I ain't such a darned idiot," was the amiable response. "It's about the tarnationest little-est, rottenest fool of a game out."

"You may make as big a game of it as you like, captin," said Mr. Gruffem. "You can bet on it, I suppose, and what more do you want?"

"Something that a man can play at, old 'oss," answered Manvers, "and not feel like a gal jest let loose from a Sunday school. I tell yer it's a dirty

little cuss of a game. It ain't hardly fit to amuse niggers, or the loafing scallywags and parsons that take their part."

"What's dat yer say?" inquired the Downy.

"You air reckoned a smart fellow, I guess," said Manvers, "in this humbugging little island of yourn; but ef you war to show yourself in that cos-tume in our free republic, you'd be tarred and feathered, I guess, in no time."

"Or shot, pr'aps, vith vun of them repeatin' pistols, as I've heerd on, with six barrils, and more," said the Downy.

"Six barrels!" said Manvers; "you air a cute coon; six chambered, you mean, rotating cylindrical breech—Colt agin the world, sirree!"

"I never heerd of the gent," said the Downy. "Hany relashun to the old hoss theer, as you called the respectable genelman as has jest left the room?"

"I guess not," replied Manvers. "You couldn't raise such an everlastin' slockdologer as our Colonel Colt, not with double all the machinery you've got in this fossil island."

"Come, that's a good un," said the Downy.

"It's good enough to have raised your country anyhow," said Mr. Lanner. "Come, what are you going to drink?"

"Waal," said Manvers, "I'm no ways particular; I'll take a smile of brandy and a drop of your Thames water. Look you, I went nigh putting six inches of my knife into one of your cusses of helps, the first

time I liquored up in the old country. Pah! to think of measuring out what a gentleman is to drink, as if he didn't know what he was able to swallow."

"I don't mind standing a bottle," said Lanner. "We're on to a good thing" (whispering) "to-night, and no mistake. Will you stand in?"

Manvers shook his head. "I expect a friend on business of my own, every moment," he answered.

"So you've never been in England afore?" said Tops, ringing the bell in obedience to a sign from Lanner.

"Never!" answered the pretended Yankee; "and to tell you the truth, strainger, I don't care how soon I leave, either, as the bar said to the hollow tree, when it was struck by lightning."

"What's your pleasure, gents?" said Mr. Gruffem, entering.

"Three brandies and a gin, cold," said Lanner. "Is my chop done yet?"

"I'll see," was the answer.

"I should like to see vun of them rewolvers," quoth the Downy, "that I should, unkimmon."

"What do you say to this then?" asked Manvers, taking a Colt from his breast-pocket. "Mind, it's loaded."

The Downy took it with such a comical air of alarm, lest it should go off, that even Manvers couldn't refrain from laughing. In taking it, however, he contrived that the only person in apparent danger of being accidentally shot should be Manvers himself, who jumped up with an oath.

"Mind what the —— you're at!" he shouted this time, with no Yankee drawl or expression.

Lanner and Tops exchanged a rapid look, as he spoke in this manner. The former hardly needed any verification of the information he had received; but if he had done so, this helped to supply it. The Downy got Manvers to take the pistol to pieces and readjust it. The liquor was brought in and drunk, and the order repeated by Manvers.

"May I look at it agen?" asked the Downy, taking up the revolver from the table.

Manvers nodded carelessly. "Ef you want to try a shot, strainger, jest oblige me by shooting the boss," he said, "the widow can charge the funeral expenses in my bill. That's how we should do it in Californy."

No one laughed more heartily at this idea than the Downy. Indeed, he got up to laugh more freely, and reseated himself pistol in hand, so as to cover himself in great measure from Manvers's observation by placing Tops and Lanner—the latter sitting in the landlord's old-fashioned high-backed arm-chair, which had served the Presidents of an Odd Fellow's lodge for some fifty years—between himself and the pseudo-American.

The moment he had effected this, he became exceedingly busy; joining, however, from time to time in the ensuing conversation.

"Whar do you hail from, strainger?" said Manvers to Lanner.

"I belong to the river steam-boats," was the reply; "but I'm out of a berth just now, and come here to

find a pal or two to do a little business." And Lanner winked at Manvers, as much as to say, "you know, old fellow?"

"Ah! I understand," rejoined Manvers. "And what's your business, mister?" addressing Tops.

"Hodd jobs," replied that gentleman; "respectable mechanic by trade."

"Anything on to-night?" inquired Manvers.

"Capital plant; glad if you'll go shares."

"Yes," said the Downy, "go in for glory. We're goin' to do a little job at Peckham."

"Peckham!" cried Manvers; "Peckham? why that's where——" and he checked himself. "I wonder whether that dried old alligator means to show up to-night?" he muttered. "It's time," and he looked at the old-fashioned clock.

Lanner frowned at the Downy. He had made a mistake in speaking of Peckham.

"Will yer jine in?" said the Downy.

"What for?" replied Manvers. "A few silver spoons, a ticker, a teapot, and a fogle? No! no! that's not my line of business."

"Well," said Lanner, who had strolled into the bar and back, after glancing at the clock, "I don't care for politics. Let's have a song."

The fact is he was afraid of something being said, which might give Manvers the alarm, before the constables, who were to be posted outside, should arrive.

"Come," he said to Manvers, "give us a Yankee touch—one of them nigger melodies if you like."

"Cuss me, ef I make such a darned idiot of myself,"

was the reply. "You should heer the melody I fetch out of niggers, when I've got 'em at work down South."

"Thank you, I'd rather not, Mr. Yankee!" said Lanner. "Come, I say, Bones" (to the Downy), "what are you good for, if you can't tip us a chant?"

"Oh! I'm kvite ekal to the hoccashun," replied that gentleman. "There's no sairimony about me, as the man said ven he took the furst turn at the fire-escape, leavin' his mother-in-law to foller. Wot shall it be, mates?" No one suggesting anything he resumed. "Wot d'yer say to the 'Honest Poor Man?'"

"Who's he?" growled Manvers. "I guess you'd want a better illumination than you can raise on your Mrs. Victoria's birthday to find that coon between Sunday and Sunday.

"The vords of this 'ere chant," resumed the Downy, "is my hown; the music was wrote by a werry celeybrated Jew as was called Moses Hart—Moss Hart they called him, for short, and in crinsekense rekvires a stunnin' chorius, vun as vould vake hup Hexeter 'All. You must hall jine in, or I'm run down in a minnit. Here's Mister Gruffem with a werry fine woice, as he keeps in the cellar for special hoccashuns."

As he spoke that individual entered.

"I can't have no noise here," he said. "I ain't got no license for music."

"Just this once, landlord," said Lanner; "and I'll stand glasses all round."

"Well, just this once, but dror it mild, gents, on account of the babby."

"Never mind her," said Mrs. Gruffem, a little pale, undersized woman with greasy curls, peeping in; "she's been awake this quarter of an hour. I'm sure I shall be glad of a little change; for I've heard nothing but them awful words which I can't abide, though I ought to get used to it, all this blessed evening. I am sure I can't think what folks use such language for—that I can't. It don't do 'em no good. I wish the Government would stop it, instead of worriting us about a few innocent games, such as skittles, which helps to draw folks out of the bar. Now, young man, *if* you're going to begin——"

Thus admonished, the Downy struck up, with a voice which was originally by no means a despicable tenor—

THE HONEST POOR MAN.

Come bile up a chant to the honest poor man,
Who dies ven he's vanted, and lives how he can;
If a joey he's got, vy a copper he'll give—
Cos he knows wot it is to be hard pinched to live.

(Chorus.) *Down, down on the table with pint pot and can,*
*Vilst I sings to the praise of the honest poor man;*
*Clink a clink—whang a bang, mates! rat-tat-ter-a-tan,*
*As we sings to the praise of the honest poor man!*

His conshense is whole, though his togs is in tatters;
'Tain't the mud of the streets as a conshense bespatters,
And he never so much as the vickedness guesses
Of the wealthy as Prowidense specially blesses.
*Down, &c.*

Yet it ain't no great wirtue I twigs in the bloke
As has lashins of ochre and mountains of toke,
If he don't get pulled up afore Lord Mayor and beak,
Vere a harmy of nobs to his character speak.
*Down, &c.*

There's the swell as is born both to title and tin,
Sich a duffer in nobblin' he's allers let in;
Vile the pious old banker to thievin' has took—
'Tain't much change, arter all, from a daw to a rook.
*Down, &c.*

Now the cove as is poor he must starve on the square,
And hoft to look hungry is more nor he dare;
For it's wus for a copper to ax in the street,
Than the vidder and horphan of thousands to cheat.
*Down, &c.*

It's safer to plant a hunlimited job,
If you don't want the law to come down on your nob;
'Tis the small lierbility nobody bilks,
Let your big vuns be plenty as vinkles or vilks.
*Down, &c.*

Then 'ere's to the poor man, for none knows his trials,
As has allers kept straight, though he lives in the Dials;
He's the angel I'll fly, for a pint or a crown,
Agen all the rich and the great in this town.
*Down, &c.*

The Downy's song was much applauded; and when he executed a brief, but marvellously rapid "break-down" as soon as the last expiring effort of the chorus was ended, the applause knew no bounds. Several customers had come in from the bar. During the confusion in clearing the room, in which both Gruffem and his pot-boy took a vehement part, the Downy slipped out unperceived. On his return, he sat down quite unconcernedly by Manvers.

"Waal," said that gentleman, "I guess you may as well return my Colt. I've had my eye on them front steps this five minutes, and I don't keer to continue the practice."

"I never robbed a pal in my life," returned the Downy; "and I ain't goin' to begin now. I slipped it into my pocket, ven I took that trifle of hexercise, and werry nigh forgot it for the matter of a minnit.

Here it is," and he placed it on the table. "I never see a Colt's rewolver afore. I'm werry much obliged to you for a sight on it."

Manvers examined the caps, and replaced it in his breast-pocket.

"I suppose," observed Tops, "that they don't think much of a man's life in Amerikey?"

"No more, I reckon," returned Manvers, "than they do in this darned old country about taking the life of a chicken."

"That's a pint I should like to harguy," quoth the Downy. "But fust, vith your leaf, I'll take a glass vith the kimpany. Your 'ealth, genelmen! Now vith regard to cheap lives, I'm for cheap living. Wot's a chap got more nor his life? It's hall werry vell to talk, but supposin' some vun helse took yourn? You don't 'appen to 'ave rewolvin' lives too in them parts, do yer?"

"Not exactly," replied Manvers; "but we're not such tarnation funkers as you Britishers. Why we make a fortin out there, and spend it, while you'd be mixing a drink, that is, if you knew how to mix one. I tell you, you're run out, and you'll have to squirm pretty smart, if we don't re-annex you out of kindness, and protect that old, used-up, worn-out, mangy quadruped the British lion under the banner of freedom——" Here the magnanimous speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Gruffem.

"Any orders, gents?" said that personage. "I thought the bell rung."

"What's the time, Mr. Gruffem?" asked Lanner.

"The right time!" replied the landlord. "The clock's square to a second."

"Then here goes," said Lanner, quietly taking out a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, and approaching Manvers.

The latter did not notice this action of Lanner at first. He was engaged in looking at his watch.

"Jeerusalem!" he muttered. "It's an hour past the old cuss's time of meeting. He used to be punctual enough. It was his sole virtue." (Feels in his pocket.) "Yes, here it is, sure enough; but he don't know that I've left a copy in safe hands. I shan't finish with him this bout, I reckon. How natural this cursed lingo comes to me now." (To the landlord, aloud.) "I say, old hoss, a light in that black hole of mine up-stairs, will you?"

"You won't want that candle," said Lanner, coolly. "John Swindles Manvers, I arrest you in the Queen's name for murder!"

"Murder!" exclaimed Gruffem, starting back.

"Come," said Lanner, "the game's up. Out with your bunches of fives. Close in, will you," he shouted, rushing with his last words upon Manvers. But the latter tripped him up, and felled him with a terrific blow. Then pulling out his revolver, he fired at the prostrate officer, and then in turn at Tops and the Downy, and lastly at Gruffem.

"Curse you, you fat Judas! this is your doing," he said. At the last shot the cap merely exploded. All the powder had fallen out of the chamber with the concussion of the others.

"Ha! ha!" cried the Downy, "I never see a rewolver afore. Blaze away! The bullets is hall in my pocket."

The answer was the pistol itself, hurled with tremendous violence at the speaker's head. Had he not ducked with wonderful quickness, we are inclined to think that the D. C. might have ended his earthly career that evening.

"Now, mates," cried the pugnacious pot-boy, who had entered of his own accord, making a rush at Manvers like a bull-dog, an animal which he much resembled.

But the desperado hurled him from him with a violence which caused him to cannon from Tops and strike the oaken panel of the room with considerable, but abated violence.

In the mean time Lanner had partly arisen, bleeding, but undismayed. On his knees, he made an ineffectual grasp at the legs of Manvers, who seizing the pepper-box from the table, wrenched the head off and cast its contents partly in Lanner's and partly in the Downy's eyes. Then seizing and flinging Tops away from him with a sort of half-blow, half-push, which, like the pat of a lion, was twice as effective as it seemed, he darted with surprising velocity and activity for a man of his weight up the stairs, and was heard to shut and bolt a door above.

There was a pause of consternation and of pain, for the pepper, though fortunately not cayenne, was sufficiently pungent to blind those whose eyes had been its recipients.

Then there came a crash, a roar like that of a wounded buffalo, ending in a shrill yell, and a thud on the stones without, and all was still.

"Lord ha' mercy on his soul!" cried Gruffem. "He's tried to escape by the little bridge, as was left hanging half-way across this morning by them beggars of Irish workmen."

Lanner was the first to recover his presence of mind. "If he's killed, he's saved his neck another way, that's all, Mr. Landlord."

The Downy and the pot-boy rushed out of the room. Tops was too much "shuk," as he called it, to stir for a few moments; but Jem, who had received by far the worst treatment, save that administered to Mr. Lanner, was a glutton for punishment and as hard as nails.

"Well," said Lanner, "he's by far the toughest customer that ever I tackled. What a name he would have made in the Ring. Sharp, too, or he wouldn't have thought of the pepper. Stop! what's this? Something he dropped in the struggle. It looks like a will. Is this what you want, mate?" (to Tops) "Give it to me again, when you've looked at it. I'll take care that it is not mislaid."

Tops took it joyfully. "It's all right," he said. "Oh! if we could only find Mr. Arthur now!"

At this moment a policeman entered, together with the Downy, whose face looked ghastly pale even through its sooty disguise, and who appeared, what with blood, dirt, and pepper, anything rather than a cheerful nigger minstrel.

"Is it a case of stretcher, mates?" asked Lanner.

"Dead as door-nails!" was the answer. "He's broke his neck, and fractured his skull, too, for that matter. What shall we do with the body?"

"Close the house, and put it in the smoke-room. See that nothing is disturbed. Well, mates!" continued Inspector Lanner, "I hope you are none the worse for this little brush with a grizzly. It's nothing when you're used to it. Just ask your wife for a basin and water, and towels" (to Gruffem), "and a little vinegar and brown paper. I've an ugly bruise or two."

"It strikes me," said Tops to the Downy, in a half-whisper, "that we've come out of this a little shady, with all the captain's cleverness. If it hadn't been for you, there would have been a pretty story to be told to-morrow."

"Vell," said the party appealed to; "he'd got clear off as fur as ve wos consarned, and no mistake. I never thought as I could 'a drored them bullets hout as I did. If I hadn't had the right tool along with me, ve'd 'a bin sarved out all round handsome. Yer see, when I wos runnin' messages at Colt's, the gent in the retail bis'ness often axed me to draw the charges of pistils, as wos brought back by them as didn't know how to use 'em. I s'pose it's no use regrettin' *his* death, as is gone, but he wos the gamest cove hever I come across and no mistake. I never had no chance of getting hold on him. And wot's more," said the Downy to himself, "I ain't much haccount, ven it's four or five to vun. It may suit the police, cos it's their dooty, but not this 'ere nigger. I likes fair play and no favour." (Aloud.)

"I should like a drop o' summat short, guv'nor. Pr'aps you'd reckymind summat as is good."

Mr. Gruffem grinned, acquiesced, and produced a bottle which he apparently kept for his own private use.

Tops and the Downy took each a couple of glasses, and the latter then divested himself of some of his "nigger" paraphernalia, and endeavoured to clean his face. But his face was unused to the treatment, and resolutely withstood it for some time. Finally, it presented a sort of parti-coloured appearance, which was highly effective and amusing.

"May I have the will with me, Mr. Lanner?" asked Tops. "You don't know how delighted some parties will be with the sight of it."

"Well," said Lanner, "you must bring it to the police office to-morrow, and must let 'em think that *you* found it, and then I don't so much mind. But be careful!"

"Hooray!" cried Tops. "Three cheers more, and one in for the little one." His exulting shout sounded strangely. The police were arranging the burly frame of Manvers in the next room, and carefully taking notes of the contents of his pockets. Moreover, a terrific storm, which had been threatening London and its environs all the afternoon, had burst over their heads, utterly unobserved during the fight, and now raged outside with all the fury of elemental conflict. Next to the heart of the dead man was a small leathern case attached by a faded ribbon worn round his neck. In it they found, not bank-notes, nor diamonds; but a lock of fair hair, and a letter, not

too well written, in a woman's hand, beginning, "Dearest Jack!" The letter was worn and faded. It had been written years ago by a gay and worthless woman whom Manvers had loved, yes *loved;* but who had never cared a straw for him, and who had lured him to his ruin. A woman of the worst description, known to the Haymarket and its purlieus, and for whom he had first robbed his employer, and taken the first step in crime. Yes, when Manvers was still the prim, precise, and methodical prince of confidential clerks and cashiers in the City, he was already a kind of "Champagne Charlie" at the "Blue Posts," Bob Croft's, and other night-houses of the West-end. "Champagne Charlie!" what vulgarity of vice do not those words suggest? Years ago, we remember a song in praise of "cigars and cogni-ac" as it was pronounced by unfledged ensigns and clerklings, and the maturer crapulous fools of thirty, more or less. Both good things in their way—the former hardly equal to the pipe, that wondrous comfort, companion, and solace in care; true friend, too, of the poor. But for a youth or man to proclaim in song his adoration of cigars and brandy as divinities—'tis an infinitely base use to which to prostitute his sympathies and apprentice his vocal talents. "Cigars and cogniac" had undoubted greatly assisted in the fall of Manvers. They had dulled his conscience and inflamed his blood. It is the abuse, and not the use of them, which we denounce; but let it be remembered that it is always the abuse which is celebrated in the Bacchanalian and Cytherean lay.

Sufficient proofs of Grinderby's complicity were

also found in the pockets of the unhappy man, whose violent death we have thus recorded.

"I say, landlord," said Mr. Lanner, who was greatly consoled on finding that his beauty was not likely to be impaired by the rough usage he had undergone, "could you manage a little supper—something hot—say a steak and fried onions, after all this? I think I shall sleep here to-night; for the storm is likely to last, I fancy."

"Certainly, Captain Lanner; anything you like, sir," was the reply. And he gave the order. "Get clean sheets on the lodger's bed, Mary," he said to a slipshod girl. "He won't want his room to-night."

Mr. Lanner was not troubled with nerves or refinement.

"Could I speak a word with you, captain," continued Gruffem.

"Certainly," replied Lanner. "Fire away."

"Well, I hope you think I acted right this evening, Captain Lanner. There is a case coming on at the Old Bailey about a robbery, and I've got a subpœna on it. They want to gammon the judge as how it were planned in this house. All I know is that I know nothing about it; but I expect that I shall come in for it hot and strong. I've got enemies, captain, as every honest man has, as tries to get a living and injure no one. I hope no offence; but if you could be there, and say a good word for me, it may save my license."

"I'll do it," said Lanner. "You may depend on me. I always go out of my way to serve a man who has done right by me."

"And about the money, as the stiff un there owes me for his lodging and keep? It's nigh fifteen pound. Is there any chance of my getting paid? It's all in my books quite reg'lar and correct."

"I'll do the best I can," returned Lanner. "There's a matter of fifty pound been found on him."

"He promised to pay me this very night," said Gruffem; "and it would be very hard if I lost it, seeing we must all live."

Lanner nodded carelessly, and lit a cigar. After a little pleasant chat, he bade Tops and the Downy good-night. "Don't forget, you must be at the station to-morrow morning, the pair of you. Here, I want to speak to you" (to the Downy). "I think," whispered Mr. Lanner, "I wouldn't say anything about drawing the charges of that revolver." (And he slipped a sovereign into the Downy's hand). "Ill take care of you. Don't you be afraid. You may want a friend some of these odd days. Eh?" And Mr. Lanner winked and nodded, and puffed his smoke in a series of little rings very pretty to behold.

Tops and the Downy got into a Hansom cab. "I must change these togs," said the former, "and get to the Hopera as soon as I can. I promised to fetch Susan. She's gone to hear the missus sing to-night. It's a fancy of hers jest to see how she's received in England. I say, what was it Lanner said to you jest now?"

The Downy told him.

"But how will he account for the bullets hitting none of us?" asked Tops.

"Oh! that's heasy enough," replied the Downy. "It was on account of his hactivity and hartfulness, don't yer see? We should hall 'ave been shot, if the hinspector of perlice hadn't bin there. It was him as dodged the bullets, and hindered we from bein' 'it."

"Oh! that's the game, is it?" replied Tops; "and are you going to be so soft as to oblige him?"

"Wot's the hodds?" asked the Downy. "It'll do him good, and von't hurt me. Vy, they vouldn't so much as horder me a pint of ale, if I'd ha' saved the Lord Mayor and the Harchbishop of Middlesex, and hall Her Majesty's ministers from bein' shot. They'd say it was a haxident, or say nothink about it, if it wos proved in court; and they'd give the revard to a party as wos handy at the time, and didn't vant it, the biggest svell as appeared to be vithin hearin' of the shots. As like as not, they'd 'and hover a testymonial and a barrinetcy, if he ain't got vun halready, to Sir Richard Mayne for bein' Chief Kimmishuner of the Bobbies the year as it was done."

"Well, I'm blowed, if I don't believe you're about right," said Tops.

"Arter all, this 'ere Lanner's not a bad sort; and if it'll hoblige him, I ain't pertickler to a shade," quoth the Downy.

"But you surely won't go for to say as you didn't do what you did?" asked his friend.

The Downy shook his head.

"I ain't agoin' to say nothink, but wot I'am axed. I leaves hall the lying and prewaricatin' to them as

can make it hanswer. They'll make it all right enough for themselves, or I don't know 'em. Don't you be afeard."

The honest fellow had reason for what he said. How often do we see rewards lavished on humbugs and pretenders, when the claims of true and real benefactors to Society, their country, and the world are ignored and pooh-poohed with contempt! If a man is too poor to put in an appearance, to advertise himself, to give dinners and reward his adherents and supporters, he is more likely to reap abuse and ridicule for a benefit conferred upon the community, than praise. When he is dead, some one may or may not seek to make contingent capital out of his fame, and urge the bestowal of a trumpery pension on his widow and children, if haply he leave any, and they survive the wave of forgetfulness which has rolled over his grave. A leading journal may take his history for the text of a leading article, and point out how his busy brain and unpaid and unrecognised exertions saved millions or gained millions for an ungrateful country. But even this is a chance, and not a certainty, and depends upon the chapter of accidents, and whether the rich pretenders who have robbed him of his fame, if not of his substantial reward, have passed away in time.

Thus may a man labour one half of his life to launch a great enterprise conceived in his own head, and triumph in the universal recognition of the fact he has worked night and day to proclaim. He shall labour the other half to identify himself with his own work and its results, and if he cannot purchase

the acknowledgment of truth with money, he shall labour in obscurity and in vain.

Nay, he is fortunate, if he does not live to reap derision for his pains, and to see his own deeds and merits commemorated on a monument to a wealthy impostor, or an aristocratic charlatan.

The cab rolled on for some time before either Tops or the Downy opened their lips. As they passed over London Bridge, the former pulled out the will from his breast.

"We must find him," he said, "dead or alive; but it's my opinion that he lives. And if we find him, and he don't settle a hannuity on my noble friend here," clapping the Downy on the back, "I'll swallow them six six bullets for pills. Have you seen the Signora? Of course not. Do you know that she has asked for you a dozen times, if she have once? She ain't one of the ungrateful sort. It's just like you. Why don't you go to see her? She'll see that you never want for anything, I'll pound it. Didn't you save her life?"

The Downy shook his head. "I ain't agoin' nigh her," he said, "and that's all about it, mate. Didn't she and t'other hangel come down vith a pot 'o money, and vere is it? Sum on it was eat and drunk on the premises, and the lieyers has the rest. Wot'll she think of my kimmershial transacshuns? I ain't agoin' to appear in her blessed bright, beautiful heyes like a fool, if I knows it. Besides, jest look at wot I had for no more than I done 'arf a score o' times and never thought nothink of no more?"

Tops looked at him hard, but said nothing. The fact is, at that moment they were both startled by so vivid a flash of lightning, followed by a deafening crash of thunder, that neither spoke for a few minutes, save in reference to the storm. Its violence, however, abated just as they arrived at the lodgings in a court off Holborn, where Tops was to change his clothes.

"Well, good-night, Mister Downy," he said, "you're a trump, and no mistake; but if you don't have a hannuity, my name ain't Tops, and I ain't agoing to marry my Susan."

The Downy pursued his way towards Westminster Bridge, over which he lived, somewhere down behind Astley's Theatre, as we have understood; and where he repaired furniture, and did odd jobs, enjoying an immense popularity among all the small children in his immediate vicinity, whose toys he mended, whose balls he rescued from various lodgments and mishaps down areas and over walls and railings, and who sometimes rode on his truck or barrow, and sometimes on his back. On this particular night his road thither was not very straight, as he stopped at various low publics on the way, played three or four games of skittles, and smoked several pipes. Suffice it to say, that it was between twelve and one before he reached Westminster Bridge. For the present let us leave him to enjoy himself after his own peculiar fashion *en route*.

Mr. Tops put on a pair of very tight black trousers and a cut-away black coat and vest, which latter reached down far on his hips, a blue satin tie, fastened

with a horse-shoe pin, and a pair of boots very square in the toes, and as resplendent as they could be made with blacking. On the summit of this gorgeous array he poised a hat, which a prince might have envied, it was so napless and low in the crown, and he felt himself fit for the "Uproar," as the Downy called it, or for a congress of the most wide-awake swells in Europe. Thus apparelled, he proceeded to the Haymarket, conscious of being half an hour too late; but radiant and triumphant, not to say defiant, in his mood and swagger. With a cigar in his mouth, a carnation in his button-hole, happiness in his heart, and the will in his pocket, which he was longing for Susan to read through and thoroughly explain, a task rather above his capacity, Tops felt, as he said, as if he had won the Derby by a neck, and positively rejoiced in his aching bones and smarting bruises.

We are convinced that no excuse, no gain, no triumph, in short, nothing will successfully plead his excuse for being late to Susan during at least the first ten minutes. Did any woman ever listen to reason pleading against wounded vanity in less than that time?

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### OUTCAST AND OYSTER.

Ung feuillet extorqué au gézier de la Nature et de la Vérité.

. . . . . .

Aulcunes maulvaises gens crieront encores de cecy. Mais treuvez ung trousson d'homme parfaictement content sur ceste miette de boue.

Ha! folle mignonne . . . . Garse rieuse!

Songe à chevaulchier les mousches sans brides. Vray Dieu! elle s'y ruée comme ung cent d'escholiers dans une haye pleine de nuvions, au desbotter des vespres. Au diable le magister!—*Les Contes Drolatiques de Balzac, passim.*

BEFORE the entrance to the Opera, a man wild and ragged, with matted hair and beard, and sunken eyes, with a torn and threadbare coat buttoned up to the chin, not even shabbily genteel, but downright poverty-stricken, to which coat, street-charity might have been justified in offering pence—such a one pauses, and ventures to read the affiches of the luxury of Music and of Song. There had been, as we have narrated, a thunder-storm, and the man was drenched to the skin; the day had been dark, close, sultry, and lurid; the artillery of Heaven had, however, limbered up and retreated, muttering occasionally with stray shots in the distance; reverberating along the reaches of the river, it might be heard

occasionally in Trafalgar-square, where there was a pause in the din of traffic. There had been reinforcements somewhere in the line of retreat, somewhere about Woolwich, and then Erith, or Purfleet; but in London the leaden skies only continued to weep in a dreary and disconsolate manner, as for a battle lost. In fact, it was a wet night after a storm. So there were not many persons, save those whose duty brought them there, hanging about the Opera House, crowded as it was; so some one said who had been in, and was speeding eastwards, without waiting for the ballet, to write his critique to appear in a daily newspaper the next morning. Arthur Aubrey, therefore, read undisturbed for a short time, reading at first mechanically, and then with a species of wild excitement approaching madness in its aspect.

What is that he says and repeats? "First appearance of the renowned singer!" (vacantly). "Ha! ha! it will be my last appearance on any stage, soon." (Continues reading.) "Bianca—Stellini—Bianca? That is Blanche!—Blanche!—my eyes are dim. Her Majesty's Theatre. Poor Queen! She cannot go to her own theatre now. It is a long time since I was at the Opera. What is the day of the month?" (Reads.) "Great Heavens! The anniversary of her death. My Bianca! my Blanche!" (Pauses and then continues reading.) "Bianca Stellini—in the celebrated opera—composed for her, expressly, and produced for the first time in this country . . . ." (Raises his voice.) "'The Blind Bride of Sorrento!' Teresina Fabiani—Signora

Bianca Stellini. Strange! strange! My head is giving way. I have eaten nothing to-day. Is it fancy? Let me look again. No! there are the letters. I must wait and try to see this Bianca come out. If she should be like my Blanche—ha! ha! what a fancy—I am going mad. But she sleeps, sleeps under the waters. The blind bride! The blind bride!"

Here there was a commotion, the Opera being over, and several persons coming out.

"I will go to the stage-door and see her, if they do not drive me away," said Aubrey. "I remember once seeing a ragged man just like myself, as I must appear now, look into our carriage as we drove away, and I never forgot his expression. The police pushed him back. Who could he be?"

Thus wildly talking, he disappeared behind a carriage.

"It's no use scolding me, I tell you," quoth Tops, who appeared talking to a young lady under the piazza. "You wouldn't listen to a word I had to say, and now I've a mind not to tell you at all."

"There's no excuse," said Susan, for it was she to whom Mr. Tops addressed himself; "but whatever you have to say, make haste and say it; for I must be home in time to meet missus. Oh, dear! it was lovely to-night. It's a piece missus has had written for her, a story something like her own. Mr. Edgar has translated it from the 'libretter.' Only she, that is Teresina, becomes rich and gives her husband all the money, and goes into a convent, and won't see him any more. Oh! it is so beautiful, the 'no, non

credo pew (più),' where she tells him she won't have anything more to say to him, and serves him right too."

"Bother Teresina!" said Tops. "Will you listen? I've got the will, I tell you. And to think you won't listen!"

"What!" cried Susan. "No! never! Got it! And is it worth anything after all, for I never believed in it?"

"I want you to see it," said Tops. "Never mind about being a little late to-night, but come over yonder and have some supper—I'm half starved—and just look at the will, and see what it is. It's a very short one, this time, that's one comfort. I've seen the date—a fortnight before poor master's father died."

"Well, I'll come for half an hour," said Susan; "for I *could* eat something myself, after that beautiful opera. Six times before the curtain! Think of that!"

"Six shots from a pistol!" cried Tops; "and it's a mercy me and Mr. Downy wasn't killed, let alone the captain! Think of that!"

"Nonsense!" replied Susan, "who ever heard of six shots from one pistol? I know better than that."

"This comes of living abroad," said Tops, as they seated themselves in a small, quiet-looking oyster-shop, on the other side of the Haymarket from the Opera House, about half-way up. "I suppose you never heard of a revolver?"

"Yes I have," said Susan. "To be sure. They

do go off ever so many times, I believe. I forgot all about them. I was thinking of her being aimed at, as one may say, with so many bouquets."

"I tell you," said Tops, "that we was being aimed at with bullets; and this Manvers, or Tadgers, or whatever he called himself, is killed, and a-lying weltering in his gore, and it's a wonder it ain't me instead, and here you talk of your blessed Opera, as if nothing had happened."

"Killed!" exclaimed Susan. "Killed! That is dreadful, indeed. But tell me, Tops. You didn't kill him, I hope? I never could like you again if you did. There, don't touch me, if you've killed a man!"

"Suppose I have killed him, didn't he try to kill me?" answered Tops, who rather liked the notion of his prowess conveyed by the inquiry. "Perhaps you'd have liked he should have killed me instead."

Susan began to cry. "Oh, Tops!" she whimpered, "I never could marry a man whose hands were stained by a fellow-creature's gore."

"Two pints of stout, immediate," said Tops to the waiter, who appeared at that moment, napkin in hand, "and a dozen ice-eaters" (so he pronounced it), "and a small lobster — bread-and-butter for two."

"Yes, sir, directly, sir. Any salad with the lobster, sir?"

"None for me," said Susan. "They never wash it clean. I had a lettuce once that was alive."

"Beg your parding, miss," said the waiter, "it

couldn't 'ave been here, we always wash our salads very perticler."

"Soft or hard soap?" asked Tops.

"Beg your parding, sir, not with no manner of soap at all, sir, but the best of pump-water. It must be Pegg's, as you mean, miss" (naming a rival establishment). "You see, sir, they've sich a custom there, which they've robbed us of, as I might say, that they haven't time to wash their salads, and folks as is drunk, as they mostly are as goes there, is not so perticler—no, sir, it stands to reason, don't it? And as for their hysters, why, I've knowed it take two people to swallow one of *them*."

"Two people?" cried Tops. "What do you mean?"

"Well," said the waiter, "perhaps the lady wouldn't like to hear it before supper."

"Drive on!" said Tops, "I think it's best beforehand. But I say, give us that stout, will you?"

"Suttinly, sir, yes, sir!" and the waiter disappeared and reappeared with the pewters.

Whilst he was gone on this errand, Mr. Tops gave a brief outline of the event of the evening, related in the last chapter, to Susan.

"Well," said that young lady, "I never heard of such a set of foolish harum-scarum donkeys in my life. You deserve a good whipping, every one of you. I should have thought Captain Lanner would have known better. Why, Mr. Downy was worth the whole lot of you. I forgive him, for his cleverness. Only think if you had been shot!"

"What's the matter with the girl?" cried Tops in answer. "You're as white as" (he was going to say the table-cloth, but hesitated) "as a sheet, that you are."

"Only a little faint! This place is so hot. Open the window. I shall be better for the stout," she answered.

And she was better for it directly afterwards.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE MEETING ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

Il se forge en ce monde des hazards auxquels les gens de petit esperit n'accordent point de créance, pour ce que ces dictes rencontres semblent supernaturelles.

THE haggard man dodged about the carriages, as if his intentions were not honourable.

"I say, Bill," said one policeman to another, "whatever's that cove up to? He ain't any one as I know. I ain't seen him try to fetch no cabs, nor open no doors."

"He looks precious wild," said the other. "I'll attend to him directly, as soon as the Prince is gone. He wants looking arter, he does."

"You don't think he's going to shoot any one, do you?" said the first speaker.

"Not he; but jest pass the word not to let him come anigh the royal carriages. Here!" (to Arthur) "be off, will yer? or I'll precious soon make yer." But Aubrey heard him not, and disappeared at the moment.

The Royal party drove off, and at last a shout was

raised, "Madame Stelleeny's car-ridge, Mad-ame Stelleeny's car-ridge stops the way!"

A neat dark brougham and pair drove up. Then came forth the great Cantatrice, surrounded by an admiring circle, lessee, manager, singers, musicians, Opera enthusiasts, *et hoc genus omne*, including large patrons in the way of loan, lord and Jew banker, admitted by virtue of their privilege—had it been by privilege of their virtue, they assuredly would have remained outside. There was the bloated Lord Tipton and Wednesbury. There was Sir Robert Postobit, who had arrived at the dignity of whiskers, and a seat in the House of Commons, and had inherited another great property, since he broke his father's heart and spent his own, and had learnt the wicked ways of the world, so far as a necessary portion of its selfishness and "prudence" were concerned. There was Lieutenant-Colonel Plantagenet, M.P., whose father was called old Stagglicher, late of "Germany"—Houndsditch, and who had surpassed all other knaves in a period of unexampled knavery in the history of the commercial decline of England. There was a very old felonious duke, of whom dark stories were told in conversation, now and then, but who had never been convicted, nor brought before a police court in his own name. There was Stingray, of course, and Hugag of the "Centipede," knighted at last as a reward for his gushing court sycophancy, at least so 'twas said. Why should not a man be knighted for social depravity in England, when a Paynim is admitted to the Order of the Garter, which was especially directed against his race, his religion,

and his existence on earth? There was a death's-head and skeleton figure in dress clothes, whom even Profligacy scouted from her ranks; until Morality pocketed his bribe, and took him by the hand, re-introducing him to Society, not even as a dreadful example, but as an injured and a slandered man. There were these and many more.

Through them quickly stepped Blanche, smiling and utterly unconscious, if not of their presence, yet of their character, their intentions, or their lives. Like the Lady in the Masque of Milton among the midnight crew of Comus, like a spell-girt sea-nymph gliding through a submarine chamber lined with interlacing polypi, she passed unconscious through that unholy throng, with all its passions, its cynicism, and its godless unrevealed history and attributes, and, above all, utterly heedless of the accursed magnetic power of its wealth. She saw in it but the lovers of dramatic art and amateurs of song. Nay, she smiled on it a sweet smile of pleasure and thankfulness, as she slightly inclined her small hooded head to either side as she went through. Outside, for a moment she threw back her hood, and looked around at the mirror-like pavements, as they reflected back the lamps, and saw the wet and glistening carriages and steaming horses, the eager crowd pushing, shouting, and moving under the colonnade, the grey pillars of the opposite theatre, the illuminated Haymarket cafés and their several groups before the door, the eager cab-drivers, and the shining capes of the policemen—all this she saw in a few brief moments, ere she gained her carriage, pulled up the window, which

caused her to look like a "Sabrina fair" sitting "under the glassy cool translucent wave," and was driven away, with a slight cheer and clapping of hands from the crowd. As she looked around her, a hoarse scream was heard, probably from some drunken wretch; and the form of a man flitted from behind a pillar, crossed the street regardless of a pair of horses, which reared nearly over him, and disappeared in the shadows of a narrow street across the road.

"Dear me!" said Susan to Tops, as they stood under shelter in front of the Haymarket Theatre, anxiously looking for an empty cab, and feeling as comfortable as lobsters, stout, the possession of the will, which Susan declared to be all right, and the prospect of their speedy union, could make them. "Did you see that man? Whatever can he be up to?"

"No good, I should say," said Tops. "I should say it's the ghost of the chap as swallowed that ice-eater, the waiter told us of."

And they both laughed a merry little laugh. Heaven help us! From thoughtless boyhood to purblind old age, how often do the pangs of others minister to our enjoyment? The clown with starving children, the pantaloon with a painful, hopeless disease, the seamstress who stitched all night at the ball-dress trimmed with roses, the girl whose attenuated fingers wove the flowers of the bridal wreath, the figment of humanity whose gait and garb cause us merriment in the street, the anguish of those who die leaving us their heirs, the toil of those who work to leave us the means of existence when they die, the armed host,

each with its Iliad of sufferings, woes, and deaths, in order that one day of triumph may be celebrated, or that one mortal name be breathed during thrice three hundred, or thrice three thousand years—what does it matter? What are days or hours in the history of the countless ocean pebbles that roll to our feet on the moaning shores? Is it not all the same story?

For some must weep and some must play.

Ay, and too often many must weep, in order that few may play.

We must change our scene. It is some two hours later, and the rain still comes down steadily, though much less heavily than before. There is an oppression in the atmosphere, in spite of the storm. Broad and massive Westminster Bridge is nearly deserted. A lengthy train hurtles across at Hungerford, probably the last, before some few brief hours of repose. The colossal Clock Tower gives forth its brazen sound. It is a quarter to two, and London sleeps, as much as ever it does sleep; for entire rest never comes to the Great City by night. Close to where yon fair and beautiful girl is sleeping in a wealthy abode, dreaming innocent dreams of paradise and love, is a grim slaughter-house, where greasy, blood-stained figures of men, and with them a nice cheerful merry lad, apprentice to the "dreadful trade," are busily slaughtering lambs. From her chamber window that young lady could see, were she to look, the shadows of the figures performing in the sacrificial rites through the grated windows and ventilating skylight, and might wonder at the redness of that glare, ruddy as

the planet Mars. It is the reflection of the steaming blood of the sacrifice on the whitewashed walls. Were she to open her window, she would hear the sounds of the assassination within—bleat and gurgle, blow and thud on the reeking floor. What of it? That young lady, horrified as she would be at the scene, eats lamb. To-morrow she will enjoy for breakfast *rognons d'agneau sautés au vin de Madère.* The lambs suffer, that beauty as well as ugliness may eat. How many nice little boys, and girls too, would like to peep in by daytime, and see the baa-lambs killed! What other scenes are going on in London at that hour, it would need an Asmodeus to tell. A father and mother sit mourning for their lost child, a little boy of ten, who fell out of a two-story window, but a fortnight before. He has just said aloud, to console her, but she knows not what he has said, "Father! not our will, but Thine be done." It was their only child. Yonder is a light from a student's window high in the Strand. He is working early and late for his examination in surgery. He, too, has a father and mother, and the thought of them is present as he studies; for he is an affectionate son. What is it that he is poring over and turning round? It is the heart of a boy killed, as he carelessly informed two or three of his friends, by a fall from a window! *O cæca mens! O dura mortalium ilia!* And were it not so, where should we be? What mind could bear to be *en rapport* with the universal and particular tortures of humanity, or even of dogs, not to speak of the entire donkey family, and the numerous martyrs to brutality among domestic cats? One sees a

battle-field, either in part, or as a panorama of the wounded and slain. Who could realise it all, in all its particulars, with all the living mourners, all the frantic scenes that shall follow, when *that* butcher's bill reaches home? So London did not entirely sleep, and Westminster Bridge was not altogether still, as the same ragged figure we saw at the Haymarket reeled across, and gained the pavement at the end near the Houses of Parliament, and looked out upon river and sky, gazing mechanically at houses, chimneys, barges, and motionless steamers moored for the night, and many other objects, all painted in Indian ink, and lighted by the yellow and sickly lamplights flickering near and far through the gloom.

"Mad! mad!" the figure shouted, with a hoarse voice. "For, as I live and am about to die, I would have sworn it was she herself. Do the fiends mock our despair with delusive forms and shapes, to turn all our thoughts from God, at such a time as this? Merciful Heaven! Is it a crime in me to die, who am unable longer to drag out a miserable existence? Last night I slept, oh, horror! horror! within the walls of a pitiless Gehenna itself. Tired as I was, the stench, and utterances more dreadful than the stench, awoke me, and I thought I was in Hell, whose fiends were at play. I was the mark of all their jeers, the butt of all their obscenities too gross for thought. I will not endure such a night again. Heaven cannot ask it of me; for Heaven surely decrees not the pollution of the soul. If I lie down here to die, my tortured body will be found and dragged to a dead-

house, and perhaps recognised. No! no! I have no pride. I have taken alms in the street. I have eaten the refuse which menials could not sell, with the fierceness of a famished hound. A merciful Providence, a vengeful Deity, can ask no more of me than what I have endured and deserve, yes, deserve. Oh! Blanche, if by some miracle thou art alive—if it was thyself whom I saw—radiant, triumphant, beautiful—but no! no! thou wast blind when I deserted thee; blind! blind! It was a trick of sight—a delusion of the senses, before death, sent to remind me more forcibly of all that I did—the enormity of my folly and crime."

The unfortunate man paused.

"'Tis but a leap," he said. "The water seems to grow nearer and invite me, as I gaze at it. I hear its rush beneath—its lapping tongues murmur of forgetfulness, oblivion. The tide is running down. So much the better! God in Heaven forgive me! Blanche, I come, I come. Thy name shall be the last on my lips—Blanche!"

He took a few paces backward, and then rushed forward. As he did so, a man met him in full career, running from the Lambeth side of the river, and sent him reeling to his knees.

"Pick up the pieces!" cried the unknown individual, who had so opportunely (as it might be) interposed. "Here, old feller! You ain't a contemplatin' sooicide, air yer! Don't yer see the fire there? Come along and bear a hand, vill yer? You'll get a warmin', I can promise yer, in no time."

So saying, the Downy, for he it was, pulled Aubrey forcibly around, and pointed to a red glare just over the bridge.

"Don't yer hear 'em a-shoutin'?" he said. "There ain't a hinjin hup yet. There's the Prince of Wales and the Dook of Sutherland'll be there directly, and they'll be a axing for me like mad."

"What do you mean? A fire? Where is it?" cried the bewildered Aubrey.

"Vy, yer not awake. *There!* This vay! Look sharp. The great Eurôpyan Limited Liability Company's Hotel's afire, that's all. Now then, this vay! This vay!" And the pair rushed off together, as the blaze increased, and the smoke rolled forth in mighty volumes, and the rattling sound of an engine was heard approaching, and the cries and shouts of the multitude rent the watery air.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE CONFLAGRATION (UNLIMITED).

Did you ever see a French fire? "Mossoo" is as active and demonstrative as a whole troop of monkeys in a blazing forest. He chatters, like the poor parrots lately burnt in the Tropical Department of the Crystal Palace. He is as brave as a lion; but somehow his energies are not practical, and he can't put it out. The French authorities press the passers-by and lookers-on to assist; the English don't encourage volunteers. We dare say it is the same thing in an inundation. But let us beware of boasting. The characteristics of both nations are altering. "Mossoo" is no longer polite, and has won a Derby, and John Bull has taken to music-halls and "la danse;" while railways, steam-ships, vacation-tours, and the Great Exhibition, have taught him some vices, which untravelled and uncorrupted he would but a short time ago, have either never dreamt of, or at least believed that they were washed away with the Flood.—*Diogenes Cynicus* (*modernus*).

If the reader ever saw a fire in London, and one in a foreign country—we will not be invidious and name any country here—but "bar one," as the betting-men say, that intelligent personage is able to appreciate at their real value the dash, energy, courage, and consummate skill of the British firemen. It is a band of heroes deserving of being chronicled in song and prose, in marble and stone "basso relievo," that rushes forth helmeted and caparisoned at the terrible

cry of "fire" in this wilderness of brick. They drive like demigods, like the charioteers of old at the Olympic Games, but with ten times the difficulty, chiefly by night, over the rattling stones, and through the crowded thoroughfares! What a sight of wonder is the harnessing and the start! You are walking in a street nearly blocked with equipages. Suddenly a sound is heard, which once heard is never to be forgotten—the cry of the gallant fellows as they cluster on the engine whirling along the street. How they manage to clear all obstacles at the pace is a miracle —say, rather a triumph of their craft. Then, when arrived, what courage, what martyrdom, what coolness, what resource! The dash past of the Horse Artillery at the gallop is magnificent, exciting; but how different the mission. Yet the mission of the Fire-Brigade is danger without glory. If a fireman perishes, little is thought or said. So, indeed, with the common soldier, as he is called in this country, being the most uncommon soldier in the world. The asses get the chief part of the credit, whilst the lions rot or starve, if they survive their "glory," which is in the deed.

It was as the Downy had said. Several lords, officers, and gentlemen, had turned into most indifferent innkeepers, and a vast hotel had arisen from the ground, not quite so quickly as Pandemonium or Aladdin's Palace, but still very quickly, at the deluded shareholders' expense. But the mismanagement had not yet exploded, and the hotel took in the public at large still, as well as its own shareholders. The place was full. The stately housekeeper had

refused with scorn that very day a dozen luckless or lucky voyageurs. There is no need to treat a traveller with contempt, when you can't lodge him; but town was full, and the housekeeper was ignorant and proud. In these hotels, when you are accepted, that is, when the house is not full, and the housekeeper consequently not inordinately uncivil, you are apt to merge into a number, like a convict, and your friends, who call by appointment, have a great difficulty in finding you, especially if you lodge high. A lift in the world is a desirable thing, and so is a "lift" in a Grand Hotel; but it has its disadvantages. It can scarcely be worked with success at two o'clock in the morning, when the hotel is on fire, and especially when the lift itself is a huge tunnel of flame and smoke, which was the case with the Grand European L. L. Hotel, on this particular occasion. When Aubrey and the Downy arrived on the scene of action, most of the inmates had escaped. Those on the sixth floor had a special opportunity, as there was a balustraded roof along which they trooped, and descended by a ladder on to the roof of a neighbouring house. The ground and first floor were all right; for the fire had broken out on the second, through a box of Vesuvians in the tail-pocket of a gentleman's coat, which he threw on the ground and trod on as he got into bed. All had apparently escaped, when our two ragged heroes arrived near the spot, save a lady on the fourth floor, who appeared at a window dressed, with a child in her arms, and who was in imminent danger of being burnt. A mutilated fire-escape did not quite reach her range of windows, and the flames

burst out beneath, so that both it and a mason's ladder had to be removed, while the fireman directed their engines beneath. Strange to say, the top portion of the escape had been struck by lightning that very afternoon. At this sight, an indomitable force and energy seemed to have leapt into Aubrey's attenuated frame. There were cries and counter-cries. Above all rose the cry: "She'll be burnt! She'll be burnt." "A thousand guineas to the man who'll save her," cried a portly gentleman in the crowd. The offer was excusable; since it was evident that he was unable even to attempt the task himself. Then a youthful form leapt from an engine which drove up, and a cry went forth that it was the Prince of Wales, and a cheer rose from the mob (Englishmen would be loyal between the shocks of an earthquake), and the attention of the crowd, and even that of the chiefs of the Fire-Brigade and police, were divided. But for this Aubrey and the Downy would not have won their way to the foot of the escape, which they did just as a momentary slackening of the blaze allowed a brief chance. But the escape was too short. Cries of "Jump out!" "Get some beds to put underneath," and "Go to the roof and you'll get out," were heard. But the lady heard nothing, save the general howl, and din, and roar. She was praying with white lips, and her child tightly pressed in her arms.

"Let me go!" shouted Aubrey to the police, who had seized him. "I'll save her, or at least die in the attempt. Let me go, I say."

"Here, mate!" sung out the ever active Downy,

who had seized a coil of thin rope, and plunged it in a fountain of water that rose some four of five feet in the street. "I'm with you."

Aubrey had just time to seize it, as the police once more collared the struggling Downy.

"What are you arter?" cried an active and intelligent officer. "I knows you. You want to rob the hot-el, do yer? Here, lock him up!"

But a cry of "Look out!" as a portion of an ornamental balcony fell caused the Downy to escape his clutch, and he darted after Aubrey, who was already, encumbered as he was with the rope, midway up the escape. Through bursts of blinding, singeing flames, the pair arrived at the top. Then the Downy unwound his companion's rope; they were but some eight feet below the window. At the first shot, he flung an end far into the room, whilst Aubrey with supernatural strength and activity, totally careless of whether he fell or not, raised himself to his full height on the giddy top of the escape, and leaping upwards caught an architectural projection, and thence an iron stanchion of the window, and gained the room.

"Lower the child to me!" yelled the Downy.

A tremendous cheer burst from the assembled mob. We believe that even Royalty, so nobly and generously urging the good work below, was completely forgotten for the next few moments. Hats and caps were actually thrown up by the mob, and strong men sobbed like babes. It was a supreme moment for a gang of pickpockets in the crowd; and Mr. Stingray lost his watch, purse, diary, and gold

pencil-case, as Aubrey plunged into the room. Half a dozen respirations of the quick-breathing spectator, and the babe is in the Downy's arms, who slid down in a truly surprising manner, considering that he had but one arm disengaged, fell the last fifteen or twenty feet, luckily on a mattress, and holding the child somehow aloft, gave it to a woman who demanded it —none other than the agonised Susan, who had been dragged out, against her utmost endeavours, below, having descended for something for the child, and lost herself in the hotel. The Downy vanished in the crowd. He was somewhat exhausted, and this time fell an easy prey to his natural foes the police. Part of the child's lace clothing remained in his grasp, and he was on the point of being carried off again, when a party of gentlemen who had seen his bravery interfered and rescued him in turn. In the mean time, how fared Aubrey and the lady? He dashed the contents of a jug of water over her. Throughout he acted like an inspired man, a human machine set in motion in a dream, knowing nothing but what he was about, and doing it bravely and rapidly. Then he fastened the rope round her unresisting form, placing a pillow, so that she might not be hurt, and beckoned to the firemen below. Two stalwart fellows understood his actions, and sprung up the escape. The rope was not long enough to reach more than half-way. The engines had played all the time on the fire below.

Placing his feet against the wall under the window, and letting the rope, which was knotted every three feet, pass round one of the massive stanchions, he

wound the first few feet from her body round his right arm, and lifted her gently over, holding her by the portion of it twice passed round her waist as by a cincture. If he could stand the strain at first, there was a chance. Then he lowered her down to where the firemen stood. They grasped her in their sturdy arms—she was saved! saved! Then another hearty cheer broke forth. "Brave fellow! Splendidly done!" But where is he? Why does he pause? His strength, his energy is gone. He reels, falls back, is about to swoon. There is a flask of eau-de-cologne on the lady's toilet-table. With the instinct of self-preservation, he raises it to his lips, and drinks it, as if it were a cordial. Then he looks about; he has new life in him.

All this passes much more rapidly than we can describe it. He looks out upon the surging multitude beneath. At this moment a volume of smoke and flame bursts out below, and conceals him from their sight. His only chance is to reach the top of the escape. He cannot return as he climbed up. He could not have ascended a second time. Nor at any time of his life could that surprising feat have been performed by him, as it was done that one time—none could exactly say how. Quick as thought, he tears the sheets off the bed and knots them together. One end he fastens round the stanchion, and then lowering himself, he reaches the escape. But the fire is now furious beneath. Half-way down he is wrapt in a sheet of flame. On fire! on fire! His hair is plainly seen to blaze. He is lost! lost! The mob palpitates and screams. For a moment, he appears

paralysed, scorched, shrivelled up. Then he emerges, but how? His clothes are burning. He looses his hold and falls. There is a mattress held up by six or eight powerful men. They catch him on it, and fling a blanket on him, and stifle the flames, and he is carried, burnt and blackened, a little distance down the street, and thence to the shop of the nearest chemist, who has been rung open to attend to a dozen minor sufferers half an hour ago. The lady is in there, and the child, surrounded by half a dozen sympathising friends. A rumour has gone forth that she is the celebrated Italian singer, the beautiful Bianca Stellini, who is saved with her child, and the crowd are in transports of enthusiasm and joy.

"Well," quoth Mr. Stingray to Mr. Swellingham, whom he deigned to recognise in the crowd, "if ever I saw a lunatic in my life, it was that devil of a ragged fellow with the long hair. Only fancy going into a fire with hair and a beard like that. I'm glad he has saved the finest soprano in Europe for us; though it would have been something to have witnessed her performance and seen her burnt in one night, which Pepys or Horace Walpole might have envied.

"Sir!" returned Swellingham, looking him in the face, "if you address one more word to me personally, now or hereafter, I'll knock you down, I will by ——!" It was as honest an oath as any that my Uncle Toby ever swore. "You are a black-hearted dastard, a disgrace to humanity, and a reproach to the Society which tolerates you for your acrid pen

and your venomous tongue. Sir! which road are you going! I wish to take an opposite one."

And Swellingham held up his walking-stick in a manner which left no doubt of his intention, had he been further provoked.

Mr. Stingray smiled as a hyena might smile, if the animal found it inconvenient to laugh aloud, but he pocketed his indignation.

"Brute! low beast!" he muttered, when out of hearing. "I wonder whether the Kemble is open yet? I'll go and be revenged on him there. I'll tell the fellows confidentially that he wants to borrow some money. Won't they all shun him then? Let's see the time. Hallo! Who's stolen my watch? My handkerchief, too, and my note-book, with my last quarter's salary. Oh! oh! oh! Here! policeman! I'm murdered, robbed, undone."

There was no policeman at hand. Mr. Stingray therefore proceeded on his way alone. He had no money to pay for a cab, and he was not certain that he should find the club open. For once, he felt what it was to be without money in the world in an extremely modified form. Impelled by the little pottering Nemesis which led Mr. Cousens into the Escurial on a certain night, and is continually dogging the footsteps of small bad men, a sort of "Retiaria" with invisible net and trident, Mr. Stingray sought to get from Whitehall to the Strand by a short cut. This led him into a lonely and deserted street. Suddenly, a woman came up to him, and asked him if he was good-natured. For once

our philosopher spoke truth, in indignantly denying the fact. The woman gave a smothered scream. "He's insulting me!" she cried. A fellow marched out of a shadow in front, and asked him with an oath what he meant. Mr. Stingray was taken aback; but he collected his energies and clearing his throat would have called "Police!" in a tone which might have penetrated the deepest area, and roused some Prussian-helmeted Mars from the blandishments of a culinary Venus, when two more shadowy figures appeared behind, an arm stole round the neck of our corpulent friend, and a perfect August 10th of meteoric stars, a shower of brilliant coruscations, rushed athwart his vision. The thieves were disappointed. A professor of a lighter style of art had anticipated them. But *quant à ce bon Stingray*, serous apoplexy intervened. A sensation, quite equal to that for which Mr. Stingray had recently expressed a wish, gratified (?) the British Public the next day. It was too late for the morning papers; but it filled a column of the "Globe," and two of the "Standard." It is an ill wind which blows nobody good. The "Glowworm" brought out edition after edition on the strength of it. The little ragged urchins whom Stingray—always spiteful towards the poor seeking to gain an honest living—hated so, made a copper harvest out of him. His decease was described in the most gushing style. When Edgar Leslie heard it, he thought he could have spared a better man. His resentments were not worked out as he wished they should be. He would have liked Stingray to have lived to see him, Edgar, a great man. When it reached Swelling-

ham, he was very grave and serious, and repented him of the bitter words he had used.

"Oh!" said a friend to us not very long ago, "that I could dispense 'poetic justice' in this world! Oh! that I were possessed of the powers of a Caliph Haroun Alraschid for one month, one year! How I would dissolve Parliament, change the Government, strip a few scores of the fortunate rogues and hypocrites, who are the curse of dear old England, distribute a few colossal fortunes, rebuke and amerce absenteeism, reform the police, nail the ears of adulterators big and small to their palatial gates or counters, sentence cruel and unjust magistrates to eighteen months' imprisonment with hard labour, turn the Serpentine through the Admiralty and Horse Guards, shut up the music-halls, proclaim real Free Trade and a Ballot, which honest Liberal Conservatives would find rather more to their interest than would the pseudo-Liberal Old Men of the Sea who have so long throttled the State, and treat the lawyers after the fashion of Peter the Great! I would play Aunt Sally to some purpose, as an honest despot should play it, and smash every dishonest sham, like clay-pipes in the mouths of a whole row of grinning idols; the mouths of Routine, Hypocrisy, Corruption, Expediency, and Betrayal, at home and abroad. The overtaxed labourer should no longer toil to fill a cullender with his thin and watery blood. How I would wake up my Lord Angelos with a block at Tower Hill! How the bow-string should be substituted for red-tape! How I would purge the nation of the red tape-worm of corruption and de-

cline. And as for the fellow who criticised me in the 'Centipede,' wouldn't I righteously settle him! Probably I should condescend to execute many a small revenge. But one thing I would promise, which is this—I would *not* indiscriminately exalt my own relations at the public cost. My wildest acts of despotism would not lead me to commit such an act. Of that a grateful and restored nation might at least feel sure! But Aristophanes himself, were he alive, could not supply words to describe the violence and severity of my actions in the cause of truth, patriotism, and justice, were I gifted with the supreme power of an Eastern potentate, to deal with the caitiffs who have depraved Society and worm-eaten the majesty and honour of the State."

πᾶιε, πᾶιε, τὸν πανοῦργον . . . . .
καὶ τελώνην, καὶ φαράγγα, καὶ χαριβδιν ἁρπαγὴς,
καὶ πανοῦργον, καὶ πανοῦργον, πολλάκις γὰρ ἄυτ' ἐρῶ.
καὶ γὰρ δυτος ἦν πανοῦργος, πολλάκις τῆς ἡμέρας.
ἀλλὰ παῖε, καὶ δίωκε, καὶ τάραττε, καὶ κύκα,
ευλαβοῦ δὲ, μὴ 'κφυγῃ σε καὶ γὰρ οἶδε τάς ὁδοὺς,
κ. τ. λ.

EQUITES, 247.

How many a poor fellow has indulged in a fancy like this! Alas! it is but the speculation of righteous folly or of inane wisdom; the dream of an Alnaschar, without even a basket of eggs; the aspiration of a petty every-day Prometheus, at whose vitals any daw can peck; but uncheered by the recollection of a boon already bestowed on humanity, the glorious sun-rape of flame. Still one may indulge in the sublime impotence, the luxury of impossibility accorded to free and fetterless Thought! "But not express it!"

cries a hideous dwarf with poisonous fangs of steel. "Ho! ho! author! look on t'other side." We did, and beheld a many-headed giant with brandished steel mace covered with gore and brains. Against the malice of Servility, and the Kakistocracy of Power, against corrupt Vendor and Purchaser in the market of adulterate souls and bodies, even the mighty masters of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, who struck the chords of human sympathy, regardless of the tyrant's frown, must have proved powerless. They would have perished, and their thoughts have died with them unpublished, unnoticed, and unknown.

What could our friend do, even could he say in the language of the same writer in another play:

> ἐγὼ θεοσεβὴς καὶ δίκαιος ὢν ἀνὴρ
> κακῶς ἔπραττον, καὶ πένης ἦν.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### REPARATION.

He who repairs a wrong
By some still greater sacrifice of self,
Is in his turn Love's gentle creditor.
There is such sweetness in forgiven wrong
Where Love reigned once, 'twould soothe a soul in death,
And throne triumphant Love in living breast,
True lord of its revolted citadel.
Who knows not grief, knows little—
A cloyed guest
At life's dull banquet. Mark! what transport springs
From welcome change, and blest vicissitude:
These paint wan cheeks with bloom of boisterous health,
These light the languid depths of filmy eyes
With quick intelligent flame; these rouse the soul
And with emotion fire the sleeping sense:
These to the surface of Life's current bear
Rich pearls of gratitude and thankfulness.
As when a mother hears a babe's first cry,
She hugs him for her pain that she hath borne.
"Thou hast cost me dear," she murmurs, "little one,"
And straightway all forgets, save present joy:
Thus Nature stands absolved of sufferings,
Which else were harsh indeed. There is no joy
Like that baptised with tears.

In the back room of the apothecary's shop lies Aubrey, silent, but breathing. He is contused and fearfully burnt. A medical man bends over him and feels his pulse. It is our old friend Dr. Miller, who had been summoned during the fire to see a patient

who had escaped from the hotel to a neighbouring house. In the room watching him with anxiety are Mr. Swellingham and Tops. The shop is full of people, and among them sits Blanche waiting impatiently, until she may come in. The doctor has been carefully examining his patient, and applying remedies to his poor burnt face, arms, and hands, which had all greatly suffered. One leg, too, was sadly burnt, the trouser having actually been in flames. The doctor had called for scissors and snipped away the greater portion of the singed hair and beard.

At length he speaks. "Tell the lady, if she desires it so much, that she may come in."

And Blanche enters, followed by Susan.

"Where is he?" she said, "where is my preserver, the saviour of my child? Oh! is he much hurt? Will he soon recover? Nay" (looking at him), "perhaps he is already dead, self-slain for my child and me."

"Calm yourself a little, madam," said Swellingham. "Here is the doctor. It is not so bad as you think." (To the doctor.) "Is it, sir?"

"There is nothing fatal, I think, to life, madam, and the patient will probably recover; unless the general shock to the system be too great. You see, he is in a very attenuated condition to offer much resistance; not much stamina, I should say. But even should he rally and not succumb, there is still a sad circumstance——" And the doctor looked grave.

"What! what is it? Speak! what do you mean?" rapidly uttered Blanche.

"The flames have reached his hair, you see," was

the answer, "and scorched his eyes. If he should recover, which I think he will do under careful assiduity and treatment, he will be blind for life."

"Say not so!" cried Blanche. "No! not blind. It is a fearful thing to be blind. Nay, let me see him plainly—let me kneel by him and embrace him —this brave man of the people—this heroic heart, to whom I, and one dearer to me than myself—owe life —preservation from so terrible a death." So saying she approached and bent over the prostrate form of the sufferer. "He looks very poor and thin, as if he had wanted even food; and yet what courage and strength!" She knelt down by the couch, and bending over his wasted and bandaged hand, kissed it passionately. "Poor fellow! To be blind for me—blind! But I will watch over you myself. I am rich, and will reward you. You shall never want for anything again. Let me gaze at those disfigured features more glorious than——ah! what is it that I see? It is my husband! I thought his voice was beside me in the burning room. Arthur! Arthur!" and with a loud shriek, to the astonishment of those present, she fell forward fainting over the insensible form of the sufferer.

For a moment, all stood still. Then the doctor raised her gently. "She ought not to have come in," he said. "The fright and exertion have been too much for her, and the sight of this poor man has finished it. This may be serious, I fear, for the brain. Carry her into the next room, and I will see what can be done. Where is she staying for the night?"

But Tops, as soon as she was removed from the

couch, stepped forward, his face pale with emotion, and tenderly lifting aside the burnt and straggling locks, looked at him long and earnestly. "It's him!" he cried at last. "It's my dear old master, Arthur Aubrey, Esquire. She knew him right enough. Here, Susan, Susan, here!" And Mr. Tops began to sob like a great girl. "Here I've got his fortin back for him, and he won't be able to see to drive his pheayton, nor to choose a 'oss agen."

"What's this I hear? What do you say?" said the doctor, who had been told the strange corroboration by Swellingham, who had stolen into the other room.

"Hum!" he said. "Truth is stranger than fiction. This alters the case. I feared a worse catastrophe than all. But it appears the poor lady has found her lost husband in this heroic outcast. And she, too, is an old patient of mine. It wouldn't be believed in a novel; though your modern writers are more unreal when they approach truth, than when they utterly eschew it. The critics would be down upon it. 'Eyes in and eyes out!'" muttered the worthy man. "It's strange enough for a sensational play."

Whilst he was talking thus, the good doctor was busying himself between his two patients. "We must have them removed," he said. "Man and wife! They ought, and ought not to be together; but I suppose the feelings of both parties must be consulted. Hallo! Whom have we here?"

A female figure had been added to the group, to use an expression *à la* Tussaud, and presently, too, a gentleman entered the room.

The lady was exquisitely attired. She had been at the Opera that night; and had not retired to bed, when a gentleman, who was no other than Sir Harry Luckless, came and summoned her, to the great scandal of the neighbourhood, to tell her of the fire.

"So you see what she is, after all!" said a lady of irreproachable fame, who constantly deceived her husband, and who lived in the opposite house, with a white stuccoed front—we mean the house, and not the lady.

"There's piety for you!" said Betty, cook-maid next door, to John, footman. "I always suspex them folks as is too good to live, to be no better than they should be. Did you see her fal-lals? And she preached to me only yesterday about throwing my scraps into the dust-hole, when there's so many nasty poor about. Set her up, indeed! I shall tell her a bit of my mind the next time she talks to me—the howdacious, himparent minx. Jest see if I don't."

It was a strange hour for such gossip, but, as we said, all London does not slumber even at half-past two A.M. Under Kitty's tender assiduities, Blanche soon came to herself. It seemed fated that the latter should regain life and bloom under the former's care.

Presently the doctor came in from the adjoining room.

"Now, take this restorative, dear lady," he said; "and then I think I must transform you from patient into nurse. The—the—noble fellow whom you have

so strangely recognised is, I think, conscious, and I want to try the effect of your voice upon him."

They entered, and approached Aubrey's side.

"To find him thus!" said Blanche. "Him, whom so soon as my success was established I had determined to seek out, if living, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. Oh! madam, my dear benefactress! Look!" (to Kitty). "'Tis my own Arthur, my husband, who has saved me, and at what a cost! Doctor! doctor! he will not die, will he?"

"Nay, madam, I trust—I may say, I believe not," was the answer.

"He has saved our child, saved me, who left him so long to perish with hunger, and cold, and the pangs of desertion, and at what a cost! His poor dear eyes! his sight is gone! Blind! blind!—and for me, who know so well what it is to be blind!"

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Kitty, "can it be? What retributive justice is here? But he may be, will be, restored to peace and happiness yet."

"Arthur! dearest Arthur!" cried Blanche, "do you not know me, your own wife, Blanche?"

"What voice was that?" said the prostrate man, trembling in every limb. "Whose form is it at yonder window? No matter. 'Tis a woman; I will save her! My life is forfeit, I tell you. I wish to die. Loose me, I say!" He paused, and then, after awhile, continued: "I remember now. 'Tis all over, I saw her saved—saved! I thought I heard *her* voice call me in a dream. There are voices round me now. Take this veil off from my eyes. I am awake, and cannot see!"

"Speak to him, madam," said the doctor, "and apprise him gently of the truth."

"Arthur, dearest Arthur, you do not dream. You have saved me, Blanche, your wife, from a dreadful death. I was not drowned, as you thought. I was stopping at the hotel when it took fire, and you saved our child, and myself, but at what a cost! No, no! I cannot tell him. Doctor, doctor! speak!"

"Our *child!* Blanche alive?" muttered Aubrey. "Great God! This is madness, and death!"

"Listen, my dear sir," said the doctor, taking his hand and pressing it gently where it was uninjured, "and I beseech you be calm. I am Dr. Miller, a physician. To-night you ascended a ladder, did you not, and saved a woman and child from imminent peril? By a wonderful blessing of Providence that woman is your wife, whom you supposed to have been drowned years ago. Well, she was not drowned, and has become a great singer. She had a child born to you shortly after she left your home. Her reputation is as white as snow," added the doctor, getting poetical, and yet taking a matter-of-fact view as to the strangeness of the announcement. "We must get you well, my dear sir! You have been sadly, sadly burnt, and I much fear that—that your eyesight is deeply injured; in fact, that you will not be able to see again—at least for a very long time," added the prudent and kindly doctor—"a very long time indeed. But we'll do all that can be done. And now you must be very quiet."

"Blanche!" Blanche!" said the sufferer, "saved, and by me? Yes, now I recollect the fire, and the

giddy height, and the shouting, and the eager upturned faces of the crowd. Then why did I not perish in the scorching flames, when I had saved her? I had nothing more to live for, save to see her once, once more, and then die. And now she is here, you say, and I cannot see her. And she is not injured—not hurt?"

"No, Arthur!" she replied, "but lives to devote her whole life to you, to renounce the hollow triumphs of the stage, to live for you, sing to you, you alone—never to leave you again—never, never!"

"Tell me," resumed Aubrey; "for my head seems confused with joy—and the terrible maddening pain—did not some one tell me of a child—a boy?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Blanche, "you have a son, born after—we parted; he is the image of you, dearest—is he not?" And she looked round, as if for corroboration as to the fact.

"I can answer for that," said Tops. "He's as like Mr. Arthur as two peas, that is, a small pea to a big one."

"Tell me his name!" said Aubrey.

"Arthur!" replied the mother. "What should he be called but that? And now, dearest, compose yourself for my sake, and we will never, never part for a single day again."

"It cannot be," he answered. "I am a beggar, an outcast. Do not touch my rags!" he said, almost fiercely. "I will never be a dependent upon the bounty of one whom my cruel selfishness drove forth upon the world. I have only repaired half the wrong. We are not equal yet; for I destroyed happiness

first. I will die fifty deaths, ere I will cast a shadow over the career of her whom I have wronged, or accept more than forgiveness at her hands. But bring me my boy, that I may kiss him once ere I die. He need not know who it is. You can make the room dark if you like, if I am something very terrible to see."

"Nonsense, nonsense, my dear sir!" said the doctor. "I can't allow this sort of thing. The child is asleep in his cot in another house. You shall see him—that is, I mean he shall be brought the first thing in the morning, shall he not, madam? And now you must take a little soothing draught. It is absolutely necessary, my dear sir."

The patient shook his head feebly, and turned it slightly away.

"Mr. Aubrey, sir, master!" broke in Tops, suddenly. "I'm Tops, your old groom, sir, if you please. You ain't dependint upon no one, sir. You're richer than ever you was. We got a new will, as your father, old Mr. Aubrey made, as nobody knew nothing whatsumever about. Here, Susan, just do tell all about it. You're ready enough to speak sometimes. You can do it better than me. Hexplain, will yer, if you don't speak another word afore marridge." And he dragged Susan forward.

"It's true, indeed, sir, what he says," said that young person. "My poor stupid Tops here has recovered another will—a codicil, I think they call it—of your father's, carried off by a man named Manvers, who shot at Tops, and got killed himself this very

evening instead, only there was no bullet in the pistol."

"Do hold your noise," said the brave but ungallant Tops. "I've seen a lieyer, sir, in the Temple, and he said, if the will was found, leaving everything unconditional to you, you'd be richer than ever; and we was going to hadvertise for you tomorrow, sir, in Austrely; for the will is found, and it do leave everythink unconditional, as the lieyer said."

The patient's lips quivered in prayer—a prayer of thanksgiving, it seemed; from a whisper or two which reached the listeners' ears. One large tear rolled slowly from the darkened orbit of a single eye into the hollow of his cheek, and there it might have remained glistening for some time had not Blanche knelt down and kissed it away with a kiss of love and hope, and soft and gentle ruth.

Then they all stole out of the room without a word, and shut the folded doors upon that second marriage, this time ordained of Heaven. Only the doctor ventured to stoop and whisper as he passed: "Not too long, madam, if you please—not too long!" And he held out the phial with the opiate with a meaning gesture.

Let us, too, leave them to themselves.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### HER DECISION.

Si di meve trabagliati
Follià lo ti fa fare,
Lo mar protreste arrompere
Avanti a semenare,
L'abete d'esto secolo
Tutto quanto assembrare
Avere me non poteria esto mondo
Avanti li cavelli m'arritomo.
CIULLO D'ALCAMO. *Lover and Lady.* An. 1172—78.

BACK to Queen's-square, not in the old house, but one not far from it. Arthur Aubrey is again lying on a sofa, his arm clasped round his little boy. He is still disfigured, but not so painfully. His countenance expresses content, nay, happiness; as much happiness, perhaps, as grown-up men and women ever feel. Only children in good health are ever really quite happy. Blanche is reading the newspaper to him, a wonderfully eloquent and philosophical article on an accident in a thunder-storm, ending with the broad propositions that we are all mortal, that we are seldom killed by lightning, and that the parties killed could not have had the slightest notion of what was going to happen to them, when they got up that

morning to go to a picnic under a cloudless sky. The first part of the article was learning and Lemprière, the second illustration and the Encyclopædia Britannica, and the third the *reductio ad nihilum*, which best befits such productions. Such articles won't do for reading to the blind, when words are weighed and meaning pondered on. They do for the busy eye rapidly to skim over, conveying no distinct purport to the mind, and leaving no clear impression on the brain.

"They are late, dear," said Aubrey.

Some friends were evidently expected. Presently there came a knock at the street door.

"It is Sir Harry," said Blanche. "I can tell, because it is such a nervous knock. Poor fellow! I hope he will not be disappointed. They would make a very happy couple, I am sure; especially if they lived abroad. Sir Harry is bent, as you know, upon going to Canada or Vancouver's Island. He says he don't much care which."

"I can't imagine'" said Aubrey, "how she can hesitate for a moment to accept his offer, attached to each other as they are."

"Sir Harry Luckless!" said a maid-servant, opening the door.

Sir Harry came in with the air of a man who is in a nervous flurry, and who would certainly cut himself, if he attempted to shave, or spill the boiling water, if he sought to replenish the teapot.

"Well, Aubrey, my dear fellow, how are you? I beg pardon, Mrs. Aubrey, I am delighted to see you. How is your dear little girl? Excuse me, I mean

boy. Ha! ha! I was thinking of one of Kitty's—that is, Mrs. Wilmington's—little pets—to be sure, yes."

And with this speech Sir Harry sat down; and then added that it was a very fine day, which, considering there was an east wind, drizzling rain, and fog, was not exactly the case.

"Mrs. Wilmington has not been here yet, I suppose?" said Sir Harry, after a pause.

"No, she has not. I expect her, however, very shortly."

"I—that is, you—are aware—that is, I wish to inform you, and—to ask a little favour. Would you mind, Aubrey, if I speak with your wife alone just two minutes in the next room? It's something very important. I don't mind telling you afterwards, if Mrs. Aubrey will permit, and will leave us for two minutes together, when I've told her; but I can't speak to you both at once about it."

"Not even when the two are one?" asked Blanche, smiling.

"There, get along with you. I know what it is all about. I shan't be jealous," said Aubrey, playing with his boy's curls.

"The fact is, Mrs. Aubrey," began Sir Harry, when the folding doors were closed, "I want you to plead my cause. There is no one can do it but you, and your lightest wish has an immense weight with Kitty—I mean Mrs. Wilmington. Tell her that it is no use going on in this way, and that it's no good breaking a fellow's heart. I'm going off very soon. I've sold everything I don't want. I've got a hundred

labourers from Waterford, and chartered a steamer. It's a perfect Noah's Ark, and I've got such an assortment of agricultural implements, as never were seen together before out of a show. There's spades, rakes, and hoes enough to make a second Garden of Eden. And if she must teach children their catechism, and all that sort of thing, there's plenty among the labourers' families to keep her hand in. I refused one fellow with eleven, five boys and six girls; but I'll take 'em all to please Kitty, if she'll only share a poor emigrant's lot. As for her money, she's always giving it away. Well, what's more easy than to settle it all right off on half a dozen institutions? Do, Mrs. Aubrey, persuade her to be my wife. I have loved her, as you know, long and earnestly, and I shall never care for any one else."

Sir Harry, whose voice more than once faltered in this semi-comic appeal, here came to a full stop.

"Indeed, Sir Harry," said Blanche," "you have my best, my warmest wishes. I believe you are both much attached to each other; and for my part I can see no obstacle to your happiness, save our dear friend's religious exaltation, and some notions which she has got into her very obstinate little head. But, depend upon it, nothing shall be wanting on my part."

"Tell her that she has almost promised me," resumed Sir Harry; "tell her that it is positively wicked to refuse; tell her that I would go to the ends of the earth with her, but that I have not the heart or courage to go anywhere and leave her behind. Just see what a fix I am in! Here I stand pledged

to all these poor people to take them to America. I did it, Mrs. Aubrey, I pledge you my word, thinking that, after all that has passed, she must and would come with us. And she shakes her head and says, mournfully, 'No, Harry, no! It would not be acting in accordance with my duty towards you, whom I esteem, love, if you will have it so, better than any one in the world, not to speak of my duty towards others.' What others? And as for me, it's like killing a man to save his life. I'll tell you what, it's cruel, that's what it is, neither more nor less."

"Rely upon my best efforts, Sir Harry. Stop! There's a ring at the visitors' bell. There she is. Had I not better see her first? Go in to Arthur. The ship sails on the twentieth, you say?"

"Yes," replied Sir Harry. "I was going to ask Aubrey to bring you on board. I should like you to see the arrangements; but I have no heart for it, while this doubt remains."

So saying, he pressed her hand with fervour and joined Aubrey in the next room, to whom he narrated all that he had been saying to Blanche.

Mrs. Wilmington entered the room where Blanche was sitting the instant after Sir Harry had left. The latter rose, pressed her hand, kissed her, and led her to a seat. "My dear, dear preserver!" she said. An entire confidence had been established between those two beings, whose early lives and surroundings had been so chequered and so different. Mrs. Wilmington had broadly sketched her early life to Blanche, her meeting with Aubrey and with Lord Egbert; the effect which her interview with Blanche, after the

rescue of the latter, had upon her, when she found herself painted in such dark colours by one for whose smile and good word she would have given so much. She told Blanche of the, in her instance, harmless munificence of the Duke of Chalkstoneville, to whom she had been a nurse and companion in his later days. She had already spoken of that which Blanche knew well, Sir Harry's reciprocated attachment. Then Blanche had pleaded his suit for him in vain, and she now prosecuted it with still greater fervour. It was still in vain. With her hand pressed upon her heart, with pale and quivering lips, but without a tear, Kate Darrell gently but firmly continued to reject Sir Harry's hand.

"No!" she said. "I love him, I will not disavow it; but I love him too dearly to bring disgrace on his name. I love him too dearly to risk even a momentary repentance, a doubt whether he had done well to marry me, which might some day occur to him, and which would wreck my peace of mind, leaving me then nothing to fall back upon and cling to for support. Besides, I have duties to perform, atonement to make to Heaven. Let him seek other climes. He has thrown away his opportunities, led a useless life here. He will go out bravely, and forget his folly with regard to me in the demands and interests of the young community which will look to him as its head. Dear lady! my mind is made up. Let me go. Let me pass away from among you like a shadow; let me be only a human being with a heart living among those who need my aid. He is one, and they are many. He will find a partner in life with

no guilty remembrances of the past to cause a pang or shudder to either, when the Sabbath bells ring pleasantly in the summer air, or when some one names a creature of sin and shame in a too conscious or sensitive ear. It is no use. I would it were otherwise; but I have thought it all over, and my mind is made up."

In vain did Blanche argue, reason, and entreat her to reconsider her decision. At last she said:

"Do you know that he is here; that he wishes to see you before he sails; that he is even now in the next room? At least you will see him, will you not?"

The face of Mrs. Wilmington assumed a strange appearance. It became marble in hue and in line. Her features actually appeared to grow rigid and thin.

"I will see him, of course I will," she said, "once more; and then it is fitting that we part and for ever. In a very brief time, I shall have ceased to dwell in his thoughts; but be a visitant occasionally when his memory shall revert to his former associates as to beings of another sphere. It is oftener so, I think, with those who go away than those who remain. But every day whilst I live, I shall remember him in my prayers."

Blanche was sadly grieved; but she felt that it was useless, and that she could do no more. So she opened the door and beckoned Sir Harry in.

Poor fellow! he did not look like a man about to succeed in his wishes. He walked up to Kitty, and took her by the hand.

"I suppose," he said, "that Mrs. Aubrey has told you that I am going to leave England, and probably for ever, next week. My happiness, going or staying, depends upon one little word from your lips. If you will marry me, I will either go or not, as you please. But I have heard you say you would prefer an entire change of scene. Tell me, Kitty, will you make a poor fellow happy, and go with me? I am lost without you. I never loved any one, save you."

"Dear Sir Harry," replied Kitty, "I will not disguise from you, that you are not, and never were, indifferent to me; and there was a time when, had you spoken as you have now, my heart would have leapt with joy. But the time has gone by for such a thing. I see my duty clearer now. I *cannot* be your wife."

"Kitty, dear Kitty!" persisted her suitor, "do not be so cruel as to leave me alone in the world, and to bury yourself alive in some dreadful place. Look here! give all your money to some excellent charity at once. I have enough for us both. As for my title, if that annoys you, I will drop it. Let my brother take it, if he likes, but don't abandon me, Kitty! Be my wife, my own dear, dear wife, I implore you!"

And Sir Harry covered his face with his hands, awaiting a reply.

"Dear friend," said Mrs. Aubrey, "to whom I owe life and happiness, the heart of my husband—all, all that I can call mine, may I add my prayers to his? Let this union complete our joy, and do not wreck the hopes of one who will devote all his future

life, to insure your happiness and remove the thorns from your path. Come, let me join your hands together with your hearts."

"Lady," replied Kitty, "it cannot be. I love him too well to forget myself. He will learn to forget me in a little time; and then some bright and good woman will bestow on him her love, and that serenity of affection unknown to such as I have been, will bless him as he deserves. Do not think me ungrateful, not to obey your lightest wish; for if you owe me some earthly gifts, what do I not owe to you? The first utterings of the soul, the ecstatic joy alone felt in doing good. Do not think this refusal costs me nothing, for I love him—love him dearly; have loved him, long before all this. I dare not speak to him more; but tell him, tell him, that I will not ally him with shame, although the bitterness of that shame is past. Tell him that if we fled to some foreign land, and that if he gave up for me his birthright and his name, we might still not be happy. Tell him that if he soothed me with too eager tenderness, I should think that he remembered the past. Tell him that if, without meaning it, he neglected me ever so little, I should leave him that instant or die."

Much more was said by all three; but Kitty's resolution remained unchanged. At length, Arthur Aubrey was called in; but he only said how dearly he wished such an union to take place, and shrank from pressing it on Kitty as strongly as his wife. It may be that he did not think it of any use, or perhaps he did not like to assume any responsibility. At

length, Sir Harry took his departure, merely pressing Kitty's hand, and giving her a look much resembling that in the picture of the "Last Appeal." All that Blanche could extract from Kitty was, that she would write to her after reconsidering Sir Harry's offer, within the next two or three days. She did write, and the following is an extract from her letter:

"I cannot alter my decision; though it wring my heart, it will not break his. I know his disposition, and the hearts of men do not easily give way. I have a mission to perform, high and holy if accomplished by the pure and good, a simple duty of atonement at my hands. And now farewell for ever! And haply if there be some who, for my sake, may hereafter think less harshly of sisters nursed in sin and reared in sorrow, and driven by hopeless penury to do wrong, those whose hearts Nature never fashioned for their dreadful career, but whom Society, in her dainty and exclusive programme, forgot; deserted, like the cruellest of stepmothers, even when they were little innocent children with sunshine playing in their golden hair, leaving them to wander amid the pitfalls of this dreary wilderness alone; if, warned by me, some of the great and powerful of my own sex think how they might have acted, had they been similarly exposed, and are led to acknowledge the universal bond of relationship that exists amongst all, where one touch of nature still lingers in the heart, then will my sacrifice not be in vain, my mission not wholly lost. Let only a larger and more comprehensive system of charity commence, and oh,

what a tide of reproach may yet be rolled back from England!

"Let not yon poor creature avert her face in the hatred of desperation, or in the darkness of the more welcome grave! Give work, give homes, give bread, but give also your hearts to the task; and, above all, banish from the sacred altar of church and dwelling him of the double face and forked tongue,—the liar and seducer, for they are one. *His* 'honour'? *His* 'word'? Trust him not, friend or associate; for he would deceive men, if he dared. Believe not in his reform. His victims may be purified, he cannot. They are the ghosts of his sins that flit in your streets at eventide and haunt your thoroughfares by night. Drive him from your presence, or you become partners in his guilt; let not his wealth or title atone for the insult he offers when he approaches you, deeming that he leaves his other existence behind, as he would change his dress, or cast his skin with the snake."

To which we say heartily "Amen!"

And thou, we add, woman, or whatever else thou shouldst be called, who hast sold thyself respectably, and in the name of "wife," either for rank or money, to a man whom thou likest not, and hast done it in all the indecency of broad day, ere the hour of noon, in the open shame and coarseness of huge bouquets and favours borne by coachmen and flunkies before the gaping, gazing crowd, with the gewgaws and the lace-trimmed dresses for night and day wear, called a "trousseau," paraded and catalogued even in the

newspapers, behold! is not the mother who assisted in thy sale a worse harridan than any of the looser class; because thou art her daughter, her own flesh and blood? And what art thou? Worse, worse than any flaunting creature thou shalt meet with in Regent-street at eve, or under the lamps of the Haymarket by night; worse, because many of these were betrayed by their confiding hearts, and many were never taught any honest or saving thing in their lives; worse, because most of these have sinned—if, in comparison with thee, they have sinned at all—from want and overtoil, from lack of kind words, shelter, and bread; worse, because they have been deceived, tempted, sinned against, driven to pollution, and thou hast not; worse, by all that Providence, and culture, and education have given thee, and all that thy sister has been denied in this her life, by civilisation, humanity, and Heaven in its inscrutable ways.

Remember that Christ Himself forgave the woman taken in adultery, and said unto her, "Go, and sin no more;" but that Sapphira was stricken with death for the utterance of a venal lie—a lie which thou hast, in thy respectability, far exceeded at the altar of the Most High in His temple on the most sacred occasion of thy feminine life, when thou soldest thyself as a beast to the best bidder; soldest thy blushes, or thy pale languor to a stranger, or a mere acquaintance, more odious for thy previous knowledge of him; soldest thy bloom of maiden modesty, the fragrance of thy virgin breast, as a Madame Rachel may henceforth sell thee her enamel for a price. Go

to! thou art worse than they whose shrieks of forced laughter curdle the midnight air of this great traffic mart of unholy desires; for they, perchance, had no choice, and to what base use hast thou not surrendered thyself?

Will Kitty ever alter her decision and join Sir Harry Luckless, who changed his name to Mr. Wilmington *en voyage* to the new and distant community of which he is the most useful, energetic, and respected member? We cannot say. All that we can answer for is, that she has bound herself by no formal and religious vows, and that at present she is untiring in her good works. Sir Harry—artful fellow—has represented in a letter to Blanche that there is great want of spiritual instruction, and of a species of good angel in his part of the world—in fact, that a schoolmistress is much needed of a very superior kind to train up the infant community, of which he is chief representative, in the way it should go. Of the importance of this to a future great branch of the Anglo-Saxon (Celtic?) race about to be grafted in the fertile and thriving township of Wilmington, he says that any just and sufficient estimation can scarcely be formed—a view which Blanche Aubrey so thoroughly shared, when she heard of the above need, want, and spiritual destitution, that she has written a long letter thereon to Kitty, in which the matter is most admirably and exhaustively set forth.

Mr. Grinderby never quite recovered from the fright and shock he received on the day he was nailed up in Webb's Fields, followed as it was by the news

of the terrible death of Manvers. For long he did not know how far he might be compromised, and his iniquity punished and made public. But he is reconciled to his son, and has shown such symptoms of repentance and amendment as an old lawyer may.

Manvers being dead, the matter fell entirely into the hands of Arthur Aubrey, who had no desire to prosecute, even had his hands not been tied by his regard and friendship for Edgar Leslie, who, with his charming wife, became the constant companions of the Aubreys. As for the latter poor folks, they are quite "out of Society;" but it is their own choice. Arthur is writing a romance founded upon his experience, from which great things are expected. He has already had a play produced with extraordinary success. It was one formerly rejected by three or four London managers, but he is now rich and independent. The critics declared that some of his situations, and much even of the language of his piece, had already appeared in a dramatic form on the stage; which was unquestionably true, seeing how much had been stolen from him! But he managed to get over that, and to prove his priority of authorship, to the great disgust of some of the pirate fraternity of playwrights. Blanche, when she can spare time from the nursery, is his eager and favourite amanuensis; but Aubrey has no difficulty in that respect, as he can afford a private secretary, who is no other than the sobered and remorseful Snap, whom Leslie stumbled on in a starving condition soon after the break up of Mr. Grinderby's law establishment.

Blanche, we need hardly state, left the stage, to the great sorrow of the musical world. She has only sung in public, since her reunion with Aubrey, at a few concerts for charitable purposes.

Tops and Susan are married, and live with Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey. As they are likely to have a family, they are about to live on Aubrey's estate, where Tops will chiefly devote himself to the management of a small grass farm and the breeding of horses.

And the Downy—what has become of an individual so difficult to provide for? He is made rich with a small annuity, and is the oracle of a club of working men. He has gone into a business, which, as he says, can't hurt him much; if there is no fear, on the other hand, of his making a rapid fortune by it. He has become a bird-fancier and seller, and keeps a shop near the Seven Dials, where he has really got a very good connexion, owing to his unvarying integrity, quaint sayings, and facetious manners. He is great in fowls, pigeons, bullfinches, and canaries, and is an authority on terriers. His dogs have the reputation of being some of the cleverest ever known.

"A dorg," he was heard to say lately to a young gentleman, who thought to take a rise out of him, "is a hanimal as wants a sight of drorin' out, afore he shows wot's in him, and them as belongs to dorgs must show theirselves worthy of a dorg's confidinse, afore they can fetch hout the kevallities as is in dorgs. There's some men as wouldn't find hout wot's in a dorg, no, not if they was to be left alone vith vun on a dissolute hisland. Instink? Yes, you can call it

instink if yer like. In corse, a dorg can't discount a bill any more than he can git a friend to put his name to vun. You'd like vun as could discount. I believe yer—so'd a many as I knows of. Ven I've picked up vun of that sort, I'll drop yer a line immediate. Now 'ere's a little bitch as discounts rats howdacious —as game a little thing as ever you clapped heyes on. Thank yer, yer don't vant a dorg this mornin'. Bless yer, I knew that afore yer spoke. You vanted a bit of chaff with the Downy—felt yer hedication had been neglected, and that yer wosn't vide avake. 'Dorgmatic' am I? That's a vord I don't understand. I'm kvite ready to larn hanything you'll teach me, and make a swop vith yer, as'll benefit both parties—kimmon sense and good manners agen hard vurds. You don't know wot the bull said to the butcher ven he torsed him in the china-shop? He said 'You've more vit than beauty.' What else did he say? Vy, that he didn't mean it anyvays as a compliment, and hoffered to torse him agen for the dammidges to the crockery. Yer didn't mean to aggerawate me? Of course not. You're green enough, but not kvite so green as that comes to neither. That vould be a hact of sooicide, young feller. And wot's more, you've kep' yer honnerabel intention; for yer ain't done it. Is that bird a moultin'? Yes, it air a moultin', and, wot's more, it'll come out a beauty, and no mistake, afore long. You thought it was dyin', did yer? Vell, it's werry hexcusable as you should make that mistake. Did yer never hear tell of human beins a moultin'? I've seen a precious sight of 'em go throught it, and some

as never did get through it at hall. I was a moultin' myself all my life, till I come here. Wot's human moultin'? Vy, poverty, to be sure. I said your hedication were neglected. I see a director of a bank in a moultin' state yesterday. He hadn't a feather left as I could diskiver, and, wot's more, he ain't likely to, neither. He was a prime cock canary vunce, as far as feathers vent. Birds is different from men? Yes, but there's a few pints of resemblance atween 'em for all that. Ven a bird's moultin', t'other birds pick at him wicious, yer see. So do human beins. That's human natur' and bird natur' safe. And, wot's more, there's a Prowidinse as looks arter sparrers, ain't ther'? In course there is. And the topmost bird he gits knocked hoff his perch occasionally, don't he? And they all hops the twig some time or other, don't 'em? And there's goldfinches, and titmouses, and pigeons, and butcher-birds, and heagles, and hawks, and crows, ain't there? And wot d'ye s'pose the last two is? Vy, the lieyers and the parsons, to be sure. I'm a field-officer, am I? Vell, I gets my livin' in the fields, more or less. Vot bird do I think you resembles? Vy, you vanted to be a chaffinch ven you come here. Wot do I think you're like now? You mightn't think it polite, if I wos to tell yer. I'm to fire away, all right, am I? Vell, I think yer'd win the first prize at a goose-club. Wot's that? You think I'm as imperent as a Londing sparrer? Pr'aps you've hit the mark this time. A sparrer as has sparred agin time and trouble, and cherruped in all vethers, vet or dry, cold or brilin'—a sparrer spared through

many a row to find friends and good fortin. And, wot's more," said the Downy, getting excited by his own fancy, "as queer a bird as you'll, maybe, find in a long mornin's valk, master! but vun as has never lost his faith in human natur' or larned to hate his feller-creturs, on account of their hevil vays towards the poor and 'umble—the coves and covesses as can't help it, and is dust-blind vith grief and troubbel, as the hupper classes is short-sighted vith their hown crinksequential selfishness. And if yer vant to know the reason, it's acos I never felt werry spiteful myself, and I knowed there must be a many a sight better nor me, if I could honly come across 'em. And, wot's more, I never lost my faith in Him," said the Downy, taking off his dirty cloth cap (for he still wore one), "as made human natur' wot it is, and rich and poor alike, and hall seasons and vethers. And now, as you've hintimated that you've honly come for chaff, and don't vant neither a rat tan terrier, as can do all but cipher, nor a bullfinch, as can pipe 'God Save the Prince o' Wales' and 'Rule Brightanier, I don't mind standin' harf a pint and drinkin' tervords yer himprovement in great hintillectual sci-intses of bird-fancyin' and dorg natur'. It's my hopinion," quoth the Downy, "and I've seen a fairish few in my time, that in this 'ere life you'll find most good vere you least expex it."

THE END.

LONDON:
C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, DUKE STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 052904767